

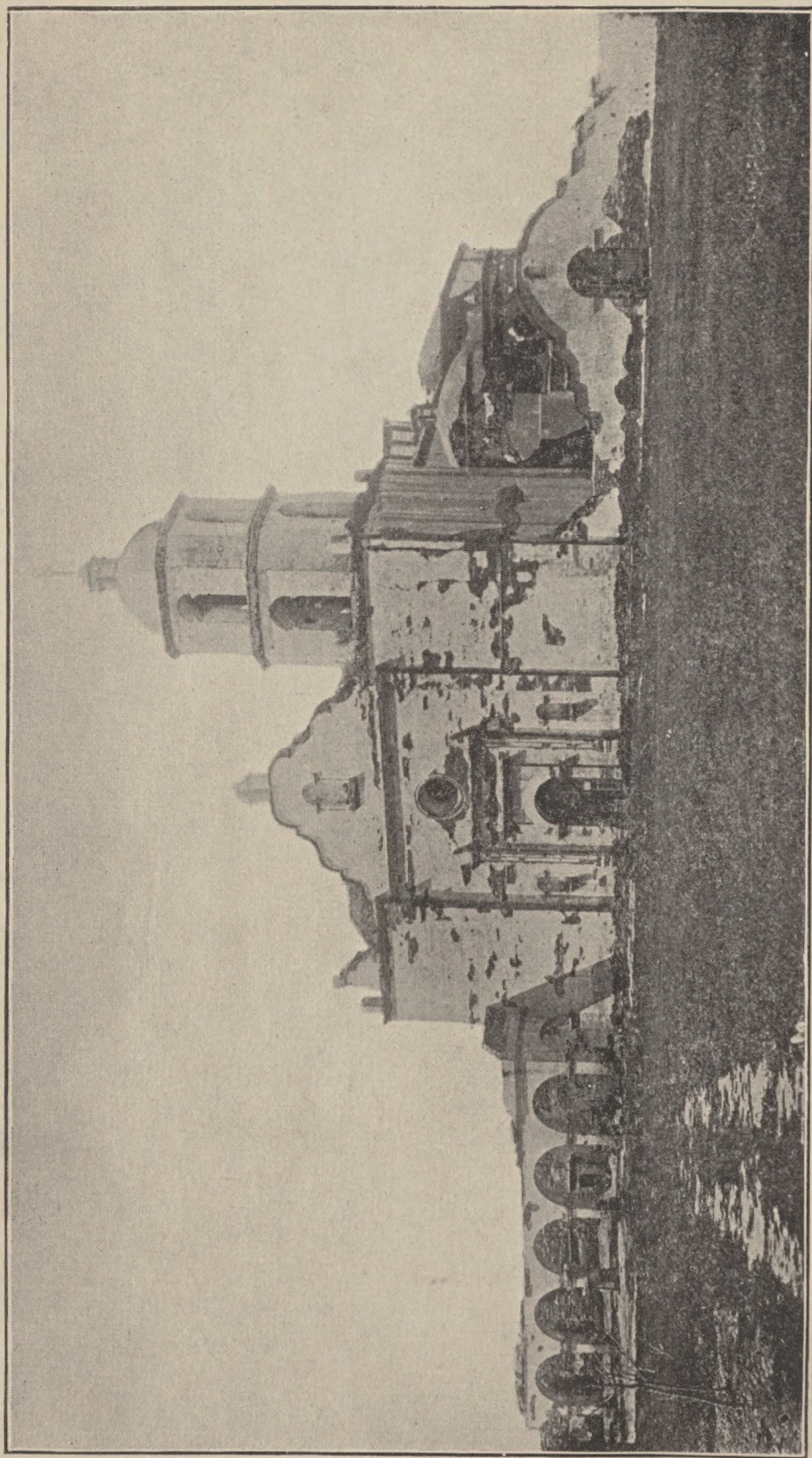


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MISSION SAN LOUIS REY DE FRANCIA

Founded June 13, 1798

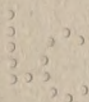
Romances of the California Mission Days

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BY

ELIZABETH GORE MILLER

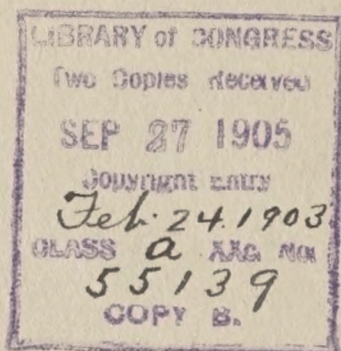
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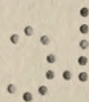
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a.s.g. Oct. 2 '05
G. F. P. Feb. 6. 13.

Dedication

TO MY SON

WHOSE LIVING AND LOVING INTEREST IN THE CALIFORNIA
MISSION LIFE HAS BEEN AN INSPIRATION IN
THE WRITING OF THESE
ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS.

THE ANGEL US

Heard at the Mission Dolores, San Francisco, 1868.

*Bells of the past, whose long-forgotten music
Still fills the wide expanse,
Tingeing the sober twilight of the present
With color of romance.*

*I hear your call, and see the sun descending
On rock, and wave, and sand,
As down the coast the mission voices blending
Girdle the heathen land.*

*Within the circle of their incantation
No blight or mildew falls ;
Nor fierce unrest, nor lust, nor low ambition
Passes those airy walls.*

*Borne on the swell of your long waves receding,
I touch the further Past —
I see the dying glow of Spanish glory,
The sunset dream and last !*

*Before me rise the dome-shaped mission towers,
The white presidio ;
The swart commander in his leathern jerkin,
The priest in stole of snow.*

*Once more I see Portola's cross uplifting
Above the setting sun ;
And past the headland, northward, slowly drifting,
The freighted galleon.*

*O solemn bells ! whose consecrated masses
Recall the faith of old —
O tinkling bells ! that lulled with twilight music
The spiritual fold —*

*Your voices break and falter in the darkness —
Break, falter, and are still ;
And veiled and mystic, like the Host descending,
The sun sinks from the hill !*

—F. Bret Harte.

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PREFACE

No State in the Union has been so enriched in those marvelous ways which Nature alone can favor a section of the earth as California. Grandeur, beauty, productiveness, matchless climate, all are hers, and more. A country, however, may have all these and kindred virtues and still lack that subtle influence so attractive to visitor and resident.

This indefinable and fascinating atmosphere is here native to the soil, only enhanced in an unmeasured degree by the historic epochs through which the State has passed. Containing, as California does, about the only ruins of large moment in the United States that were the works of other than the prehistoric aborigines, it challenges the interest of student and tourist yearly aside from the sublimity of its landscapes.

The story of the Mission Fathers and of the founding, prosperity and passing of their pioneer sanctuaries is a romance in history. There is nothing like it in the records of any other country or any other age. It stands alone, uniquely beautiful and ever attractive.

The history of California practically had its beginnings with the advent of the Franciscans, under the able leadership of the saintly Father Junipero Serra.

This era is a poem in the heroic narrative of western conquest. Sectarian prejudice is lost in admiration for the ideals of the Mission Fathers and the quaint and simple life of the Mission days.

This life is a permanent contribution to the literature of the world, and the poet, painter and novelist find in its varied phases an inexhaustible mine of themes. The rising of new generations in the Golden State and the ever-increasing travel to the California coast further afford a great incentive to the repeated portrayal of these enchanting times.

Many books give the history of the Mission period, and a few endeavor to present its delightful atmosphere. To the latter class this little work belongs, written after long study of the Spanish-Americans and many years residence in the State. It is sent forth in the hope that others will also become interested in this beautiful pastoral life, which ever has been and ever shall be something to be lived, loved and dreamed about—the Mission Days of Alta California.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE WARNING BELLS OF
LA PURISIMA

VESPER BELLS AT
SAN CARLOS DEL CARMELO

*When deeper shadows of the night o'ertake
In silent way the early evening hour,
Then soft and low the silver bells forsake
Their quiet vigil in the mission tower:
In rhythmic measure sound the silvery notes
As o'er the peaceful valley they vibrate;—
How tuneful sweet the holy music floats,—
While drowsy doves in sudden flight gyrate.
So in such twilights oft I take my way,
To pray at Vespers in the place where dwells
An absolution for our sins of day;
What consolation 'neath those saintly bells;
And at my death I ask no greater boon,
Than pass away as floats their sacred tune.*

—“*Father Junipero Serra,*” Act II, Scene II.

THE WARNING BELLS OF LA PURISIMA

SOME time before the decree of secularization had gone forth, and before the rumor reached California that the Missions were to be secularized, Padre Mariano Payeras, the Franciscan president, then serving at the Mission of La Purisima Concepcion, was warned in a dream of a great calamity about to befall those pioneer sanctuaries.

In the Padre's vision there passed in review before him, the picture of the gradual decay of those holy temples. He dreamed the warning note of their coming doom would be heralded far and wide by the mission bells ringing out the sad tidings at the hour of midnight. In this dream, which warned him that secularization would be established, and with that advent, the slow but sure decline of those prosperous shrines of worship, he saw the loving attempts of the converts to stay the march of decay, as each faithful soul stretched forth his feeble hands in efforts that were powerless against the blighting effects of the change.

He saw the ruined walls and altars, the broken images of beloved saints, and the dwindling away of the neophytes, when they came at last to believe

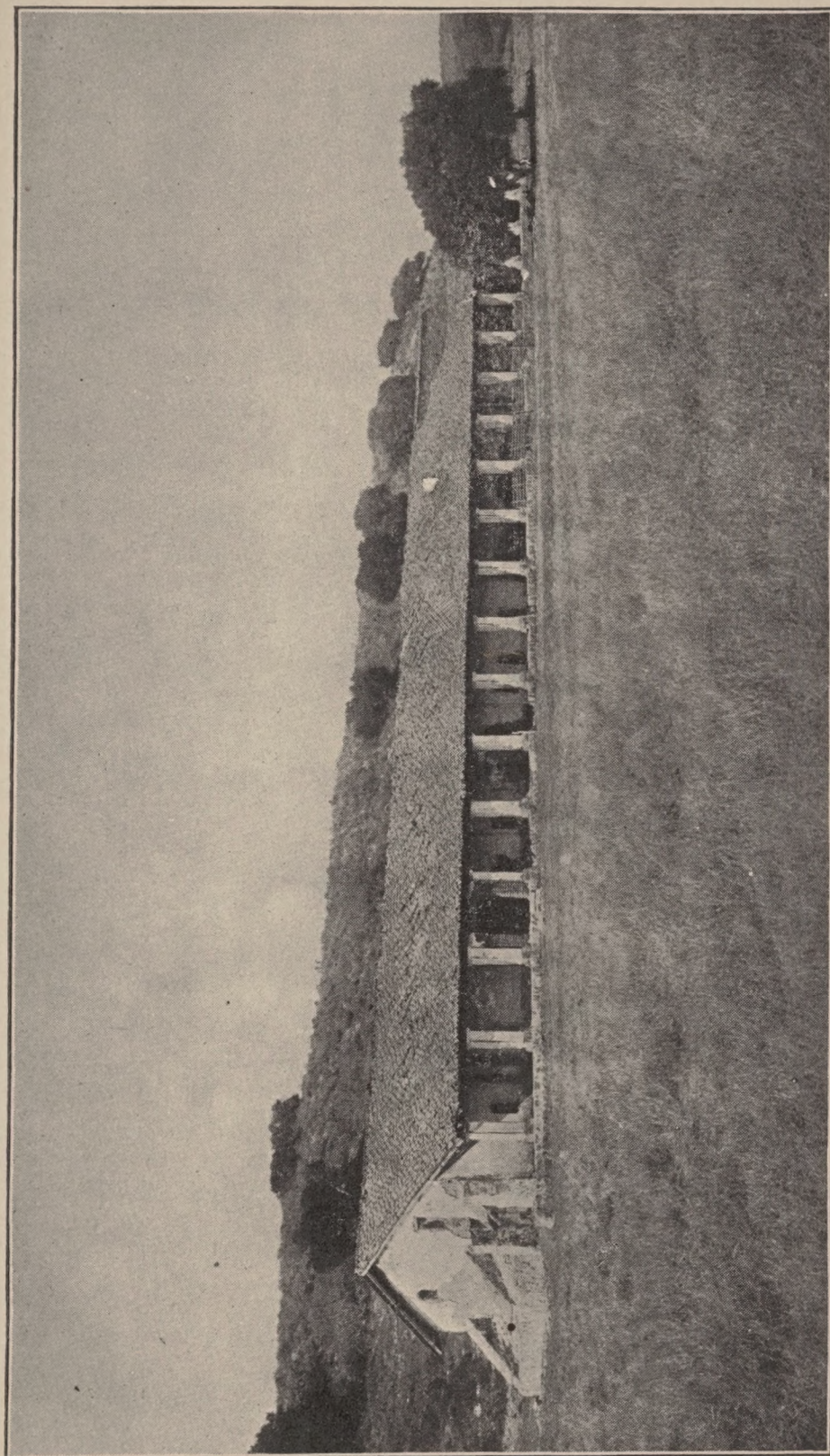
ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

that evil spirits were hastening the terrible work of destruction. He saw the pictures of desolation, misery, and want among the padres who starved in their cells that food might be saved for the famished children of converted Indians. At last the scene of utter ruin was made complete by the passing away of the Franciscan.

With terror Padre Payeras awoke and reviewed this warning dream. So great a power for evil as secularization he knew he was not able to cope with; he could only watch and pray. Difficulties almost unheard of, he and his band of Indians had surmounted in building and rebuilding La Purisima. Undismayed by the earthquakes and floods which had wrecked their first efforts, they had hopefully reproduced and dedicated Purisima anew, the sanctuary in which they now worshipped.

Of all the missions, Padre Payeras most loved La Purisima. With his own hands he helped to build her walls and by his kindly ministrations helped to civilize and baptize her savages. And he had hoped and prayed that his life might be spared many years to convert more souls to his blessed faith.

No sweeter bells ere rung from mission towers than were to be heard from the arches of La Purisima. Their purity of tone was the padre's pride and joy, and their heavenly music found a responsive chord in the heart of the holy man. That peace and prosperity followed wherever the



MISSION LA PURISIMA CONCEPCION

Founded December 8, 1787

THE WARNING BELLS OF LA PURISIMA

padres planted the sacred cross, was proven by the flourishing village of converted Indians, living in contentment on the banks of the beautiful Santa Ynez River. To the consecrated the bells wafted a blessing in their call to evening prayer, and whether rung in joy or sorrow the voices of La Purisima's bells were understood by all. But now the certainty of coming danger, more devastating than the earthquakes, more ruinous than the floods, appalled the heart of Padre Payeras ; and he prayed that the danger might pass them by, while hourly expecting the warning notes to fall. Long after his assistants had sought repose did the bowed form of the priest kneel at the foot of the cross as he implored the saints to protect the shrines that bore their names. Night after night he walked back and forth over the tiled floor of the gloomy corridor, while the wind, with its icy chillness, swept past the bent figure now suddenly grown old with grief. At times he walked to the sacred bells, hanging in their niches, and placing his hands on the cold metal, lovingly caressed them. To him they were instinct with life, and understood the sad office they were called to perform. Padre Payeras soon grew seriously ill from exposure and suffering, yet he kept within his own breast the knowledge that a blow was about to fall, which would forever crush out of existence their beautiful pastoral life.

Continuing his watching and praying, he suddenly started one night and straightened his bowed

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

form as he halted in the black shadows of the corridor. Then he listened with straining ears to the faint sound of a bell, which he fancied he heard in the distance. Surely he must be dreaming again, or his imagination was overwrought, for those solemn tones came not from the bells of La Purisima, but rather from the bells of Mission Santa Barbara. Not alone was the padre familiar with the bells of Santa Barbara, he knew by heart the tones of every bell from San Diego to San Francisco Bay. In another moment there pealed forth answering sounds from the far north; they were from the bells of Carmelo and La Soledad; and now, near at hand, was heard the bells from the neighboring missions, Santa Ynez and San Miguel. Again from the north came the blended sounds from the bells of San Jose and San Juan Bautista, and clearly distinguished from them were the silvery chimes of San Antonio de Padua and San Louis Obispo. Then solemnly chimed the bells of San Louis Rey and San Antonia de Pala, joined with those of San Gabriel and San Fernando Rey. Another and yet another chime of bells were rung until the padre had counted the full number of his beloved missions. Still the bells of La Purisima hung silent in their arches. At last, as if reluctant to announce to the padre that the warning foretold in his dream was fulfilled, Purisima's bells slowly broke the silence that reigned under the tiled roof of the mission, and moved by invisible hands, sent

THE WARNING BELLS OF LA PURISIMA

forth on the midnight air music that sobbed and moaned like human voices, starting the inmates from their slumbers in alarm and filling them with superstitious fear of evil tidings.

To the padre, standing immovable as the statue of a saint, the chorus of bells blending together in harmony was the grandest, the most awe-inspiring sound he had ever heard. It was a solemn requiem mass, chimed over the dead hopes of the Franciscan monk. Aroused by the continued ringing of Purisima's bells, the more venturesome assistants of Padre Payeras hastened to learn the cause of the disturbance; only to find his apparently lifeless form on the cold, damp floor of the corridor. It was many hours ere the stricken padre regained voice and told the sad story of the missions' doom, now confirmed by the warning bells of La Purisima. From that time age rapidly overtook the holy man; broken in health and spirits, he never recovered from the shock he received on that fatal night while waiting for the warning voices of the mission bells.

He did not live to see secularization established and the beginning of the general ruin, for he died a few months later of a broken heart. Aged with toil and sorrow, but not with years, Padre Payeras could not live to see his labor of love so ruthlessly destroyed by vandal hands. His last request, that his remains lie buried within the sacred enclosure of the church, was granted, and there, beneath the

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altar where he so often knelt in prayer, he sleeps. Above his grave La Purisima's bells solemnly tolled a requiem for his eternal rest.

Time, never halting in her work of destruction, has woven many changes about this hallowed spot, till now, shorn of all resemblance to the once prosperous shrine, the ruins of La Purisima Concepcion alone remain to tell its sorrowful history.

With bowed heads we reverently stand before these sacred monuments, that so mutely tell to us the story of the past. We listen to the wind, sighing through the trees, and fancy its singing is for the repose of the souls of the grand old padres, whose ashes now mingle with the dust from the crumbling walls. We note that the grasses and poppies, swaying in the soft air, seemingly droop their heads in sadness as the passing breeze moans through the ruined corridors and sacred temples of the dead. Then, as the shadows of night approach, and the bells call the faithful to evening prayer, we, in imagination, bring to the places the people and scenes of long ago, and with the vesper music ringing in our ears, for a brief time we live with them the ideal life of the early mission days.

Slowly the pictures of pastoral life dissolve, and dimly, through the wreaths of fog, which hang like a cold, gray web over the ruins, we again behold the revered sanctuaries in all their desolation. The shattered altars and broken tiles are mute witnesses of the destructive elements, time and neglect. Let

THE WARNING BELLS OF LA PURISIMA

poets sing of their vanished glories while yet a vestige of their once stately beauty remains. Immortalized in prose and idealized in song, these memorials left by time to remind us of the Franciscan epoch in California, will live in memory when their walls are crumbled to dust and returned to the bosom of Mother Earth, from which they sprung.

THE OLD SEÑORA

THE PADRES

*Those who attend immunity from care,
Should on the Mission Fathers' lives reflect ;
They, subjects of a fleeting time's impair,
Left lessons which too many oft neglect.
Along the coast and on the desert waste
They toiled, with true religious zeal their thought ;
For martyr here and there a cross was placed,
Those deaths they envied, those the crowns they sought.
None asked their help and found that help refused ;
His race, his caste, his creed, barred not their door,
The path to which the rich and humble used,
Some sorrow to relieve, some hope restore.
Few lives can show a more exalted state ;
Their virtues no brief proem can relate.*

—“Father Junipero Serra,” Prologue.

THE OLD SEÑORA

THE old Spanish adobe house stood far back from the road, on quite a rise of ground, overlooking the sea on one side and giving a fine view of Mission Santa Barbara with its background of mountains on the other. Broad verandas entirely surrounded the house, and the sloping roof of tiles covered them on all sides, making the rooms quite dark and gloomy; but what mattered that when they were used only for sleeping places? In pleasant weather, life went on pretty much out of doors, and when it was cold or rainy the big, open fireplaces were filled with logs, which crackled and blazed and lighted up all the dark corners in a most cheerful way.

It was hard to say which season was enjoyed the most there, for it was a very jolly party that had taken possession of the ancient adobe, and all seasons were alike to them. The house had been built for over a hundred years, and was still in almost as good condition as when first erected, though darkened by age and stained by the storms of many winters. Hernando, the Spanish Don who built the place, laid out the grounds and planted the trees, was a man of great wealth and influence, and no money was spared to make it one of the finest estates on the coast.

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

On each side of the wide avenue leading from the main road were rows of olive trees now moss-grown and looking as though they had quite outlived their usefulness. Many other fruit and ornamental trees in the spacious grounds served to show, even in its neglected state, a most beautiful spot. Climbing roses and other vines, as aged and quite in keeping with the ancient appearance of the place, were gnarled and twisted out of all shape in their efforts to still cling to the supports of the veranda as to an old friend, and the net-work of roses and vines made a fine screen, through which the sun shone in softened light. How perfect the place must have been in all its cultivated beauty could still be seen in the tangled wildness of its uncultivated growth. Each generation from the Don down to the present time, had evidently taken less and less interest in the place, or perhaps it was the lack of money to keep it up. This is more than likely, as we find most of the descendants of the grandees of those days now quite poor. However, at the present time the hacienda was tenanted by the last and only living descendant of the first Don and also by people far removed from him in blood and country, and yet no party could have occupied the mansion and appreciated it more than did this little family from New England.

It all came about in this way, and it seemed somehow as if destiny, Providence or whatever you choose to call it, had a hand in bringing this last

THE OLD SEÑORA

descendant of Don Hernando to live for a while in the ancestral home.

But to properly introduce the Señora we will have to go back to the Don's time. The daughter and only child of the old Don who settled near Santa Barbara and erected the adobe mansion, had outlived all but one of her descendants. The young girl now occupying the house with her friends was the last living representative, and this was her first visit to the home of her ancestors. All the other members of the family had been born in the old home, excepting Anita, who claimed cold New England for her birth place. Twenty years before our story opens, the Señora Gonzaga lived with her great-granddaughter and two Mexican serving women, in the house in which she was born, and in which she was likely to die. The Señora had almost reached her ninety-ninth year and was apparently as well able to attend to her affairs as she had been twenty years before; and to say she looked after them with sharp eyes would but half tell the story.

Money was not as plentiful as in her father's time, still the Señora managed to keep up quite a style of living, and when she rode out in state, as she often did, with her beautiful great-granddaughter, no more aristocratic old dame was to be seen in all the country around. The old lady had been a great beauty and belle in her day. She had received her education in Spain, and

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after being presented at court, had traveled extensively with her father. Her marriage into an old Spanish family in Madrid did not bring her much money, but what of that? Her father had enough.

The Don died soon after the marriage of his daughter and left her his vast wealth, only requesting that she return to the home of her childhood. So, with her husband, she returned to California, bringing the remains of her father, who wished to rest in the mission cemetery by the side of his wife. The Señora and her husband little knew the value of money and their style of living and entertaining, which was spoken of as almost princely, soon exhausted the income from the Don's many possessions. The Señora's husband, Don Ferdinand Gonzaga, did not live to see his son and only child grow to manhood, but died when his heir was still quite a lad. From then on the Señora lived for her son. Her expenses were reduced, but every advantage of education was given the boy, besides several years of travel and life in his father's country. The Señora, in the meantime, turned her attention to money-making by overseeing her many olive orchards, which had been neglected since her father's death. Her hard work and close attention to business soon proved how capable the still beautiful Señora was as a business woman. As a result, money was quite abundant and the house began to take on a more prosperous look as

THE OLD SEÑORA

great preparations were being made for the return of the son and heir from abroad.

Don Hernando Gonzaga, named for his grandfather, was a handsome and polished young man and fully justified all his mother's pride in him, and there were great doings, feasting, dancing and entertainments without number in the old mansion and in the homes of the neighboring grandees, in honor of the return of the young Don. His mother was well content to give the control of her estate in his keeping, and sit back and enjoy seeing him master. The feasting and gaiety continued several months, for on his return the young Don had fallen in love with and married the beautiful orphan niece of the Governor of California. She brought a small fortune with her, and together their income was sufficient for the regal style of living of Don Hernando's youth.

Unfortunately the young Don had no head for business, and after a few years the Señora Gonzaga found things in much the same shape as at the time of her husband's death, if not worse. Now some of her valuable lands and orchards had to be sold to pay the numberless debts which had accumulated. And as misfortunes never come singly, Don Hernando's wife died of a lingering fever, leaving her husband almost crazed with grief; and neither his mother nor his seven-year-old daughter were able to comfort the heart-broken man. Don Hernando never recovered from the blow and only survived

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

his wife a year. A year full of sorrow for his mother, as she saw him fade before her eyes, and knew nothing she could do would interest him in life again.

Again the Señora Gonzaga was left alone in the house with a decayed fortune and a young child to keep her company. She was still a beautiful woman with all her old charm of manner and love for society, but again must she strive and labor for another child—her grandchild. And faithful to her duty, the Señora took up her work as before, but it was plain to be seen, not with the same heart, though not a word of regret for her lost fortune did any one hear her utter. Her grandchild was her constant companion; in fact, so much she desired the child with her that she employed teachers and had her taught at home, instead of sending her to the convent. The child grew into a lovely girl, and while she had many companions of her own age, she never seemed as happy as when in the society of her grandmother, whom she truly loved and admired, and it was evident to every one that the Señora was bound up in the love of Perdita, as she was called. It was often remarked that the Señora had been proud of her son but loved her granddaughter.

At seventeen Perdita married the son of their nearest neighbor and the Señora's best friend; the Señora exacting a promise that they should live on the old homestead with her. Several happy years

THE OLD SEÑORA

went by. The Señora managed her place and did well, but not sufficiently so to warrant their former style of living, and it was doubtful if she cared for society as of yore. Her granddaughter and husband had no desire for great display, and were content to live a more quiet life. Their ambition was to travel, and they had long talked of a voyage to the old world, but could not make up their minds to leave their grandmother, and the grandmother did not wish to make the journey ; so, after thinking it over, they agreed to go and leave Collita, their little daughter of nine years, as company for her great-grandmother — and it was well they did, or the Señora Gonzaga would have died the last of her line.

After a year spent in travel abroad, her grandchild and husband took passage on a ship for home, joyfully hoping soon to see their child and grandmother. But misfortune followed them on their return, and they, with most of the passengers, were drowned in a wreck of the ship. The sad news almost killed the Señora, and she was never after the same ; her heart was broken, and she went about sad and lonely, not even caring for the love of her great-granddaughter. She had been heard to say that she would never place her affections on any one again, but would do her duty by the child, who, by the way, was not like her mother in having a loving disposition, but was inclined to be exceedingly headstrong. The Señora was growing

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

old and had not the patience of her younger years, and with a wilful great-granddaughter peace could not always reign. So the child was sent to the convent, to be trained by the good Sisters, while the Señora led a quiet life attending to business, as was her habit, and getting consolation for her sorrow by constant prayer and devotion to her Church.

Several years went by. The old Señora, as she was now called, had disposed of all her land but the part surrounding her home. She said she was growing too aged to work, and did not want the care of so much property. How she invested her money no one knew, for the Señora was not one to gratify idle curiosity. Some said she had given it to the Church, and others that she had hidden it away from her great-granddaughter, whom she did not love. Though she may not have loved her, Collita had many advantages that wealth could give, for the Señora spent her money as freely for this child as she had done for the others. She was a bright and lively girl, with plenty of dash and spirit, much as the Señora was in her youth, it was hinted; but the will of the Señora was never crossed, for she had a most indulgent father and husband. But with Collita things were different, and on her few visits at home she had found the house dull and gloomy, and the Señora not inclined to indulge her. So the prospect of a home with her ancient relative was not looked

THE OLD SEÑORA

forward to with much pleasure, and being of so independent a nature, Collita began to cast about in her mind how she could make life more agreeable than it would be with her great-grandmother and the old serving woman.

“Not a very bright prospect, but I must change it somehow,” she laughingly used to say. If the Señora could have seen anything she would have known that this child was the most beautiful one of all the Don’s descendants, not even excepting herself when she reigned as queen of all the young girls. Collita, well contented, felt perfectly able to take care of herself, and when she was invited by one of her schoolmates, at the close of her school life, to spend a few months with her in Los Angeles, she accepted without consulting her great-grandmother. The Señora made no protest, but seemed willing to have the house to herself a few months longer, so Collita went with her friend without a thought of what the result would be.

After a three months’ visit she returned and took up her life quietly with the Señora, seeing very little company, but driving about with her great-grandmother, and showing her more attention than she had ever done before.

In time the Señora’s heart quite warmed toward Collita, when she found her so thoughtful of her comfort, and so little inclined to fill the house with mirth and dancing, for which the Señora had no interest in her old age.

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

But the sequel to Collita's indifference to society was soon shown. The friends she had visited in Los Angeles came for a return visit; and with them came a dashing young military officer, who was on leave of absence from his regiment, stationed at New York. It was soon quite plainly observed that he had Collita's heart in his keeping. He stopped in the neighborhood of the Señora's mansion, but each day found him in her home. The old lady was too much absorbed in her Church to notice the young people, so they walked and drove and spent hours sailing about on the calm Pacific, but before the Señora realized that a love affair had been going on under her eyes, young Captain Brentwood proposed for the hand of Collita. Then did the old Señora wake up with a vengeance. Never should Collita, with her consent, give her hand to a Protestant and an enemy of her people. The blood of the Spanish aristocracy must not be defiled by a marriage with a plebian *Americano*. Never would she give her consent.

Collita well knew there was no appeal from this decision, and as Captain Brentwood's leave of absence was almost over, the young people quietly took the matter into their own hands, and on one of their horseback rides were married by a parish priest, in one of the neighboring towns. When, on her return, she informed the Señora of what she had done, the old lady sat as if turned to stone;

THE OLD SEÑORA

then, rising in all her majesty, she denounced the girl for her disobedience, and bade her leave the house and never return. So, when, a few days later, Captain Brentwood took the steamer for New York, his young bride went with him, glad, as she said, to shake off the gloom of the old home, where there had been so much more trouble than happiness. "The place will come to me some day," she said, "then I will sell it, for it has brought ill-luck to all its possessors." But cold New England proved no friend to this daughter of a sunny clime, and after six years of happy married life, Collita drooped and died, like a beautiful hot-house flower, exposed to an icy blast.

Her letters, asking forgiveness of the Señora, had never been answered; but Collita wrote one more when she found she could not live, and told her great-grandmother of her little daughter, now five years old, to whom she had given the Señora's name; but no answer ever came from the Señora. She had, as it were, put Collita out of her life, and though fate willed she should outlive her great-grandchild by some years, she died at last, without taking notice of her namesake, the little great-great-granddaughter.

It was by accident that Anita's uncle saw mention of her aged relative's death, and the account of the funeral, which was the largest ever known in that part of the country. The Señora's great age and her remarkable life brought friends and

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acquaintances from far and near to attend the burial. Her death was as exceptional as her life. She had gone to her room one evening, feeling as well as usual, and when her serving-woman went to speak with her a short time after, she found her sitting in her chair by the window, dead.

Captain Brentwood did not long survive his wife, to whom he was deeply attached, and when he died he left his little daughter, Anita, to the care of his sister, with whom she had lived since her mother's death. After learning of the Señora's death, Anita's uncle, in the interest of his niece, came to California to look after the property left by the Señora; but nothing more than the old homestead was to be found. Every scrap of paper or clue to any money she might have left had been destroyed by the Señora. The Señora's only attendant, in the last year of her life, could not or would not give him any information. It looked as if the Señora, believing she was the last of the old and aristocratic line, wanted all relating to her family to die with her. Leaving the servant in charge of the house, Anita's uncle returned, disappointed in not finding other property for his niece, besides the ancient place.

Anita Brentwood, heiress to the old home of her ancestors, was still a member of her aunt's family, and shared with her cousins the love of her uncle and aunt. At the time this story opens, Anita, now eighteen years of age, was a most beautiful

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and accomplished girl. In her aunt's family, among her light-haired and blue-eyed cousins, Anita was a startling picture, with her dark Spanish beauty, and her moods were quite as startling as her looks. At times the uncontrolled and reckless desire to break away from all restraint took possession of her. It was the same spirit of rebellion that had characterized Collita, and led her to defy her great-grandmother. When in this mood Anita would saddle her horse, and on his back she would dash over the country at break-neck speed, till horse and rider were ready to drop with fatigue. "It is the only way I can get relief from the uneasy spirit that possesses me," she would say. "Only let me subdue the Spanish in me, Aunt, then I am your New England girl till the spell comes again." She was full of romantic notions, and had a wild desire to visit the home of her ancestors. She said a strange and unaccountable feeling dominated her at times and urged her to make the visit without delay. "And then, Aunt, I lose all control over myself and rebel against the fate that keeps me here."

For hours she would sit dreaming and weaving fanciful pictures of the old house and the old Señora. So when the doctor proposed a change for her aunt, and mentioned California, Anita was transported with delight. She would now see the Spanish house where the grandees of early California had revelled in the pleasures and sympathized

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in the troubles of the Señora, and perhaps there were some yet living who had known the old lady when she was in her prime. Anita had been taught to speak the language of Spain, so she felt qualified to talk with some of the Spanish people yet remaining who had known her mother and great-great-grandmother.

On her arrival with her aunt and cousins, she found the adobe mansion had been closed for years, and moths, dust and dampness had quite ruined most of the old furniture, but every piece was precious to Anita, and must be saved at any cost; so with her own hands she patiently cleaned and mended much of what seemed at first past saving. Then she chose the Señora's room for her own, and to it removed all the pieces of furniture that appeared to her as being those once used by the Señora. For comfort, her aunt invested in some more modern furniture, and they settled down for a long sojourn. The fires were never permitted to quite die out, so the place always had a cheerful appearance, and in the chilly evenings and mornings, around the great hearth, they discussed over and over again the long and eventful life of the old Señora, and her bitter revenge in destroying or hiding all family papers.

"I am powerfully impressed with the belief that my great-great-grandmother has secreted things of value in or about this old adobe, and I cannot rest till I find them," said Anita, as she sat before the

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fire one rainy evening, in what she chose to call the Señora's favorite chair. "If there is anything in spirits returning to this world, to commune with the living, I mean to call her's to me. Something draws me nearer to this place each day; I love it for itself, and I love it for the associations, the mystery, the romance which hallows it; and when I think of that grand old Señora, who so bravely lived a life of constant disappointment and trouble, I love her, too. How lonely her last days must have been. I do not think she did right in banishing mamma, and yet, she must have felt justified, for she was a good woman. I never go in her room, the room where she died, that I do not feel her presence, and the sensation is peculiar, not quite friendly, and not altogether unfriendly; but I mean to make her love me yet."

"My dear, I hope you are not growing morbid over the secrets of this old house," said her aunt; "you would better let such fancies alone, and enjoy life with your cousins."

"But do I not, Aunt? When did I ever have such a glorious time as now? How we did ride to-day, and my horse shot ahead of all the rest, and never stopped till he landed me in the grounds of the mission, and when the others rode up, I was looking at them from one of the mission towers! Then we wandered over the church and through the cemetery, and I visited the graves of my ancestors, and the monument that was erected to the

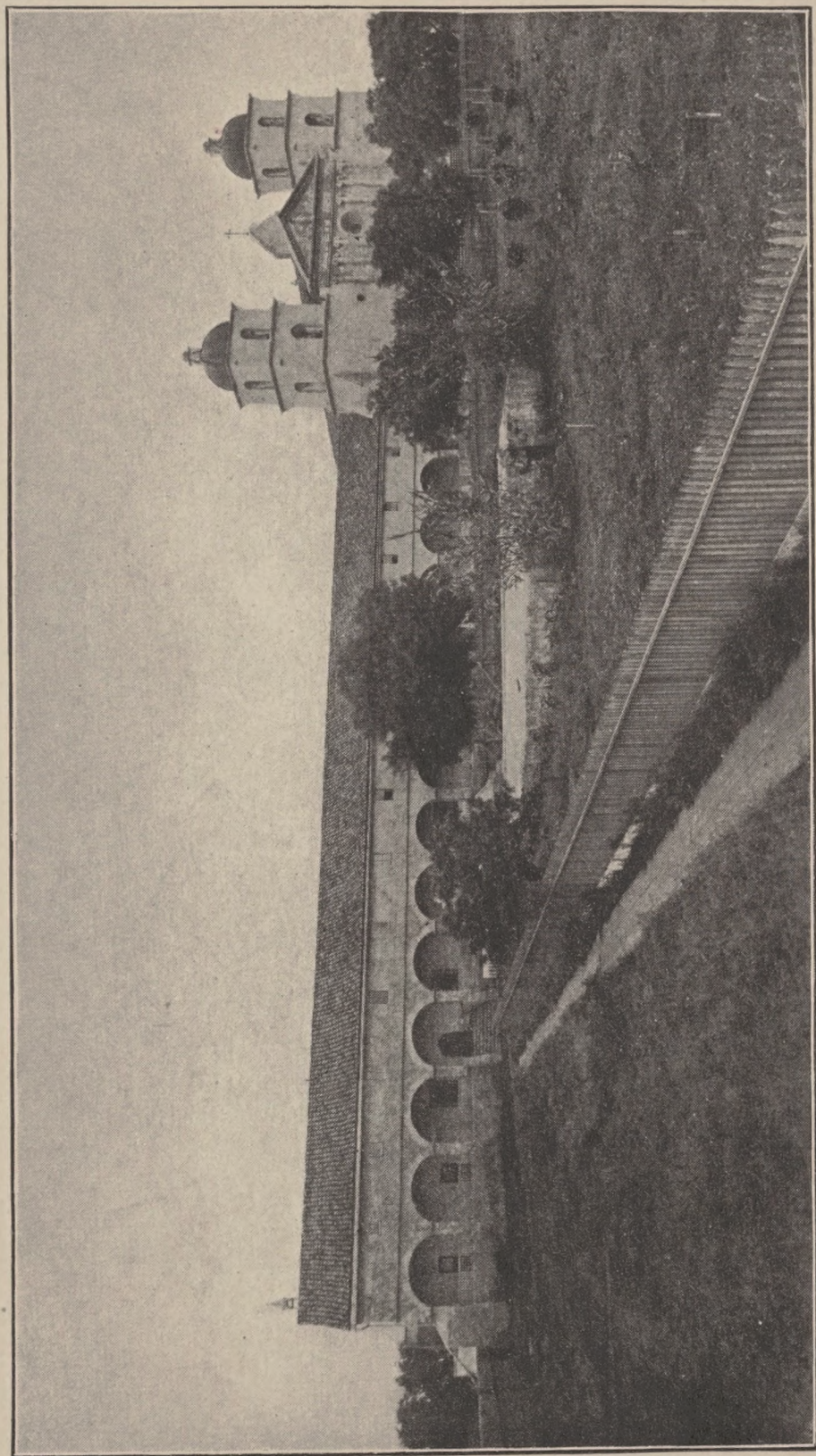
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memory of my grandfather and grandmother, who were lost at sea. How sad that all my ancestors but the Señora should die so young! I wonder shall I? Perhaps not. I have her name, besides all the old people here say I am the Señora's youthful image, and I hope to live as long as she did. Only think, Aunt, one old, old, Mexican woman crossed herself and exclaimed, 'the Señora!' when she saw me coming from the church to-day. I wonder if she thought I was her ghost?" said Anita, earnestly.

"I see it is useless, my dear, to remonstrate with you," said her aunt, with an amused look, "for all subjects that we start end with the one most interesting to you, namely: your ancestors."

Anita laughed and then sat silently watching the fire, her great velvety black eyes seeing pictures in the coals, of the splendor in which the Señora once lived, and thinking dreamily of the time when her own mother sat in the same chair and looked in the same old fireplace, and dreamed of her betrothed, her handsome soldier lover, for whom she was willing to forsake home and country and her only living relation.

"I wonder who will come to woo me?" she thought. "How much I should love to have one of those dashing Spanish cavaliers of 'the olden times' step from out the past and in his courtly way kneel at my feet and offer me his heart and fortune. But," arousing herself, "I must not



MISSION SANTA BARBARA

Founded December 4, 1786

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dream so much of my mother's people. I am only half Spanish, and am also an unwelcome visitor in the home of my Spanish ancestor, who would not have me come here in her life-time, and manifests her dislike of me now by withholding the secret hiding-place of the family heirlooms, for there were many treasures; I remember having heard my mother say, jewelry, diamonds, silver plate, beautiful miniatures of the family painted on ivory and documents and letters of several generations, which would be most interesting to me, could I but see them."

At her aunt's and cousin's request, Anita took her guitar, and softly touching the strings, sang for them the musical melodies of Spain. Her sweet voice was just suited to the plaintive airs she chose, and as she sang on and on, as if lost to all her surroundings, she made a most lovely picture, with the fire-light shining on her beautiful face and soft, dark hair. The picturesque old room never seemed more enchanting than on this night, with the cheerful glow from the fire lighting up all the dark corners and casting subdued shadows with softening effect on the rough places, and beautifying anew the antique furniture.

"Surely," thought her aunt, "could the Señora see her last descendant now, and know how thoroughly Anita is in harmony with the place and people, she must relent and come to her, if such a thing were possible."

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That night, for the first time, Anita dreamed the Señora appeared to her, holding a crucifix in her hand, but when she eagerly reached forth her hand to welcome her, the Señora slowly faded from sight, and nothing remained but a white cloud, which settled over the chair by the window. The dream was so vivid that Anita felt convinced she was not sleeping, but that she had really received a visit from the old Señora. She was nervously excited all the next day, and told her aunt she knew something more would happen before long to confirm her belief.

Her aunt and cousins tried to laugh her fanciful visions away, but the dream had made too strong an impression on the romantic girl for them to shake her faith in it.

The three following nights Anita dreamed the same dream. She saw the Señora each time with the crucifix in her hand, and saw her again disappear, as she neared the chair by the window.

Anita's imagination had now reached such a state that her aunt had fears for her health and urged her not to sleep in the Señora's room, but if she would do so, to let her cousin, Lucy, share it with her. But Anita said she was not nervous and would rather stay alone. She was satisfied, she said, that she had not been sleeping and dreamed of the Señora's visits, and to prove it she would sit up all night and sleep by day.

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But nothing came of her watching; she neither saw nor dreamed anything more of the Señora for several nights. But her faith was unshaken in the belief that she would appear in a short time, so she was not discouraged.

At last, one night when the moon was shining, and her room as light as day, the Señora came again to visit her old home. Anita was sitting by the bed, partly resting herself against the pillows, but under the influence of the strange spell which deepened the intensity of her desire to meet her great-great-grandmother, she had lost all control over her own movements for the time being. It was, as she afterwards said, as if her spirit had separated from her body and gone in quest of the Señora's, impelled to do so by an attraction so strange, so marvelous and so foreign to any sensation she had ever felt before, that she could not account for it.

Such a dazzling light came across her eyes that she closed them for a moment, but ere she opened them she knew that the old Señora was in the room with her. She first saw her sitting in a chair by the window as if asleep; then she arose and walked about the room until she reached the chair. This time she pointed towards the corner near the window, again, she moved about, stopping as before near the chair and pointing downwards. For the third time she traversed the room, repeating the same motions, then she sank into the chair

and closed her eyes as if sleeping. For a few moments she sat thus, then once more arose and slowly moved in the direction of the bed where Anita reclined, until she stood close to her. Three times she made the sign of the cross and kissed a small crucifix which she held in her hand, finally moving towards the chair, she gradually faded from sight. Again came the dazzling light which caused Anita to close her eyes, but when she opened them a moment after, she was alone in her room, with the silvery moonlight shining all about her, and on the pillow where she reclined there was a small ivory crucifix, curiously carved and yellow with age. That it was left by the Señora as a token of her love and forgiveness, she felt willing to believe, after having had such proof as she had witnessed.

Anita, confident now of a perfect understanding between herself and her aged relative, and sure of finding the treasures on the morrow, went to bed and slept peacefully till late the next day. After breakfast she astonished her aunt by telling of her night's experience, showing her the cross, and then proposing to have the corner of the floor indicated by the old Señora, torn up.

"My child, have you taken leave of your senses?" her aunt exclaimed. "You are really carrying this nonsense too far. Some one must have thrown the crucifix in your window, knowing you were brought up a Protestant — and all the rest you have dreamed."

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"I know, Aunt," said Anita, "it seems very foolish to you, but it is very real to me, and I shall never be satisfied until the floor in the corner of the room by the window is removed."

"It is not removing the floor I object to, Anita. The house is yours, and you are of age, to do as you choose, but I fear for your health if you are disappointed. You are in such a state of excitement now that I hardly know you for my sensible New England girl."

"I shall never be a New England girl again, dear Aunt," said Anita passionately. "I am thoroughly Spanish now, and have been since I entered this house. My New England blood and my Spanish blood never would flow easily together, but were always at war, and I've lived in a state of torment with the two elements. It has been a process of heating and cooling in my different moods, as you know, Aunt, it was fire and ice, but the fire has melted the ice, and it will never cool again. I know where I belong now, the Spanish blood in me predominates, and I am a true descendant of the old Señora. Never mention to me again, dear Aunt, the story of the landing of my father's Pilgrim ancestors on that bleak New England coast. The recital of their suffering from cold and hunger would make me shiver on the hottest day. I wonder my mother lived there as many years as she did. She must have loved my father very much to have been contented in his country. When I have found

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my buried treasures, Aunt, I will go to Spain and live ; live as I have never lived before. But come, Aunt, I am impatient to get some one to take up the floor, and I promise you if we find nothing there, to give up searching further and never will I believe in signs again."

A short time after this the family were all in the Señora's room watching the Mexican Anita had engaged to remove the boards. It was no easy task he had on hand, for the boards were securely fastened down, but he worked with a will, wondering the while what the young Señorita was having it done for. Various were the expressions on the faces of those who looked on.

Anita, with most expectant gaze riveted on the floor, wasted no attention on any person in the room. It was a moment of too great importance for her to have a thought for other than the Señora's secret. She did not notice the amused look on the faces of her cousins, or the half pitying and sorrowful expression on the face of her aunt, who was ready with sympathy and comfort for Anita, in case of disappointment.

No word was spoken as the first board was removed, and a second flooring discovered underneath. The double floor looked suspicious, and wonder took the place of amusement on many faces. Two more boards were pried loose, and then the interest deepened as they saw that the second floor of smaller boards covered a wide

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space. These, on being taken up, disclosed a cemented vault, which extended some distance under the house and was large enough to hold several good-sized trunks. At first there seemed nothing but darkness as they all eagerly peered down its depths, but when a light was brought and held over the place, it shone on an old chest of ponderous make, which was in the far corner of the vault.

The Mexican had plenty of help now from Anita's eager cousins, as they jumped into the vault to assist him to drag the great trunk to the light.

"I say, Anita," said her cousin Ralph, "you are a witch to have dreamed this all out, and I will never question your powers again, even though we find nothing but rubbish in this box. It is heavy enough, by the way, to be filled with gold," said he, puffing and panting as he, with his brother, dusty and covered with cob-webs, tugged and pulled at the old chest.

Anita, the calmest one of the party, now that she felt the others were convinced she had made no mistake, looked on with a happy light in her beautiful dark eyes, which were seeing visions of the treasures the box contained.

After much hard work, the chest was safely brought to the light, and left in the Señora's room. Then the boards were replaced over the vault, which was never again to be used as a hiding place

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for the Señora's property. Anita now had the rusty lock broken and was soon ready to examine the contents.

"Come, children," said her aunt, "we will have no curiosity till Anita has first looked over her inheritance, then she will show us what she wishes us to see. I know she would choose to be alone now."

Anita thanked her aunt for her thoughtfulness and promised they should, in a short time, see all that the chest contained.

"It is kind of you, Aunt, to suggest I should choose to be alone, for so I should. I shall feel the same reverence in opening this chest as I would in looking into the graves of my ancestors. I know every article in it has been placed there by the Señora, and I feel she will not be far distant while I am looking them over."

Left alone, Anita sank down by the chest, and with her ivory crucifix in her hand, breathed a prayer of thankfulness for the discovery. Then, reverently lifting the lid of the chest, she gazed with tearful eyes on this gift from the dead. The first thing she touched was a letter addressed to herself from the old Señora. It began :

"To Anita Brentwood, my great-great-grand-daughter :

Know when you have found our family treasures, that all is peace between us ; for nothing but your love for them and your love for the old home would

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have revealed to you their hiding place. You must be a true daughter of Spain to inherit my forgiveness.

From your great-great-grandmother,
ANITA GONZAGA."

Enclosed with this letter was another saying if the box was not found by Anita Brentwood, but discovered by other than she, the contents of value were to be sold for the church, and all papers and letters destroyed.

Again Anita bowed her head in thankfulness that she had been permitted to find and possess these precious relics of the Señora.

Valuables untold were revealed to Anita, as she tenderly lifted each article out from its hiding place. Rich silks, laces, family jewels, portraits painted on ivory, and letters and numerous documents were found. At the bottom of the box, beneath the family plate, which was a fortune in itself, Anita discovered enough Mexican gold to make her a rich woman. The jewels, of almost priceless value, sparkled as brilliantly as when worn by the Señora at the Court of Spain. Anita looked long and lovingly at a miniature of the Señora, painted when she was a young bride.

"I believe I look like her," she said. "I will see." Clasp ing the diamond necklace about her beautiful white throat and fastening on the other jewels, she next twisted a lace scarf about her head, in imitation of the one in the painting, then glancing in the mirror she was

surprised and delighted at her resemblance to the picture.

"I will be painted in her dress and jewels," she thought, "and when I am an old Señora, I can be reminded of this fortunate event in my life."

Hours she lingered over these relics — time was forgotten, till her aunt's knock reminded her that the day was almost gone and that she required rest and refreshments or she would be ill.

Day after day found Anita still lingering over her great possessions, and each evening the family, sitting about the cheerful fire, marveled anew over the wonderful discovery.

The Señora's heart must have relented a short time after the death of Anita's mother, and she evidently chose this singular way to prove Anita to be worthy of her race and Church. The grafting of the cold New England religion on the Spanish stock was short lived, for Anita turned to the faith of her ancestors and proved in all things that she was a true Spanish maiden. Still her love for her aunt and cousins was not lessened, and when, a year later, she visited the older world, they went with her, and there, in old Madrid, she lived something of the gay life of the Señora's younger days.

Anita never returned to this country, for the Spanish cavalier she used to dream about when sitting before the fire in the old house, came to woo her, and laid his heart and fortune at the feet of the beautiful girl. He won her consent to be

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his bride, and adopt his country, and there she made her home. And now no part of her life is so interesting to her children, and no story so eagerly asked for as the story of the nightly visits of the old Señora and the finding of the chest of treasures in the historic adobe, built by Don Hernando.

Longing at last to do what was right and yet unwilling that the mementos associated with her happier years should fall in unappreciative hands, the Señora felt, in preparing for the coming life, that she could not give up her hold on this until her mind was at rest. That her spirit hovered about the old house where she was born, and where she died, was proven by the mysterious power exerted over Anita, and controlling her movements until, through her, the Señora could make restitution for the one unkind act of her life. Grandly, beautifully, and with all her old-time dignity, she gave up the secret she had striven so hard to conceal. Impelled, as the young girl said, by the strange attraction of spirit to spirit, which was made so powerfully manifest whenever she entered the Señora's room. And in regard to the ivory crucifix, Anita never doubted but that it was placed on her pillow by the old Señora.

THE TRAGEDY AT THE OLD MILL

SAN GABRIEL

*Franciscan Fathers deemed the spot so fair
They planted olives and the purple grape,
And gentle, pastoral Indians gathered there
To hear the lessons planned their souls to shape.
The circling hedge of sharp-spined prickly pear
Was barrier sure to all designing foe,
But any friend who wished might enter there
The willing hosts' sweet charity to know.*

*The full-voiced chime that pealed the matin call
And bade the toiler to the vesper chant
Still hangs in arches of the ancient wall.
But now its rhythmic tones are sadly scant,
There spaces are like empty cloister cells,
That echoed once the hallowed sound of bells.*

—L. Worthington Green in "Overland Monthly."

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IT happened many, many years ago, while this country was still new, and while the Franciscan friars were looking hopefully forward to the spreading of their blessed faith. Peace, plenty and religious zeal were then the results of the earnest working of friars and neophytes.

The padre pioneers chose a lovely and wildly beautiful spot, in the picturesque and fertile valley of the San Gabriel to build their mill—a mill which stands to this day, a monument to the industry of the fathers and their civilized band of Indians.

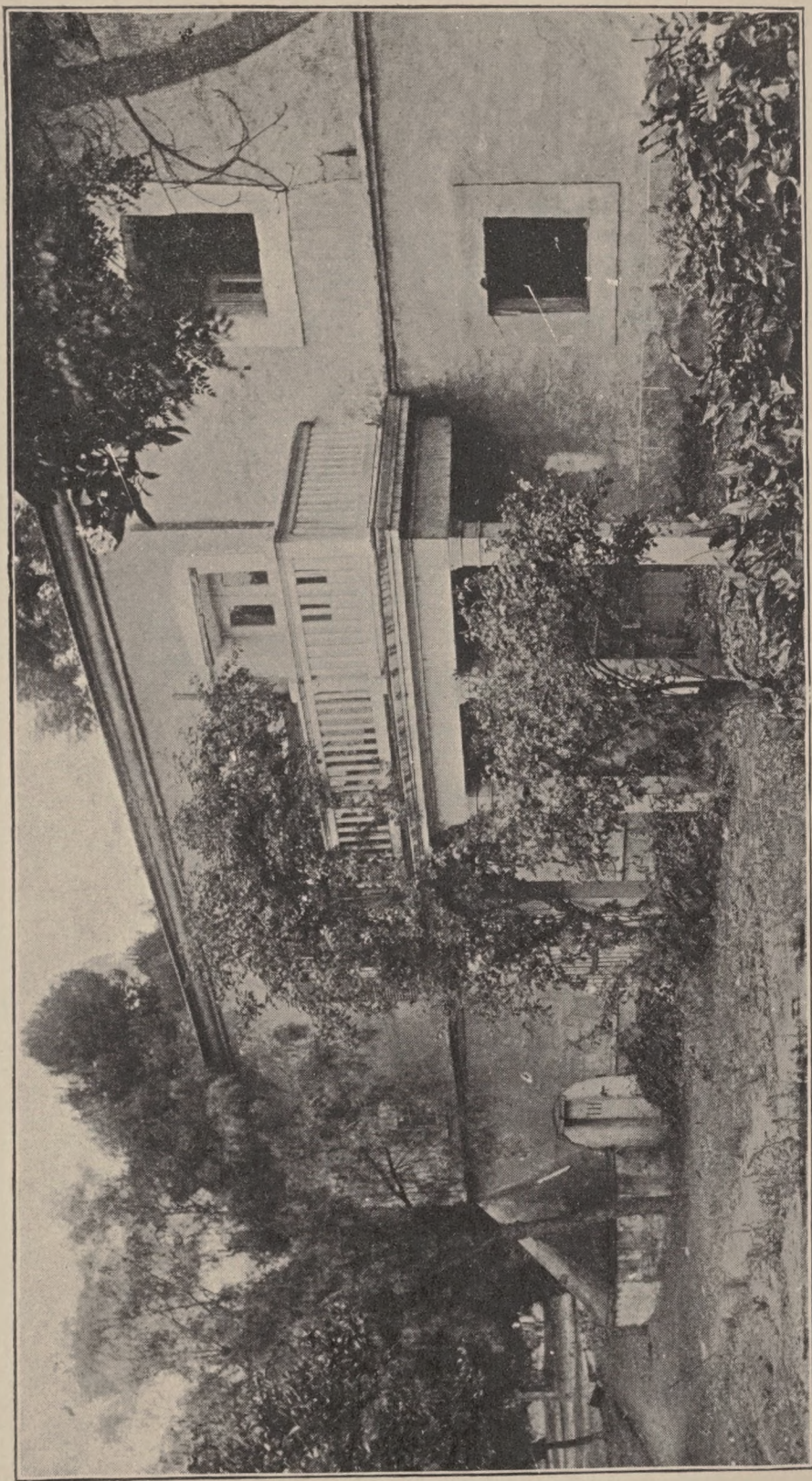
The thick walls of the old mill, the rude architecture, ruder in finish, and unlike any other mill in fashion, takes the visitor to this interesting ruin back in imagination to the days of Spanish California, and introduces him to the primitive methods of grinding wheat and corn in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

During the peaceful reign of the padres, and at the height of the valley's prosperity, there occurred a most dreadful tragedy in this historic mill. It was a crime which stained the waters of the spring flowing from under one corner of the building, red with innocent blood. It was a crime that left its imprint of misfortune for many years, blighting alike the place and people.

This mill, which played so important a part in the valley's history, did its share towards civilizing the savages. Curiosity to see the workings of such a wonderful structure, brought the untutored ones from far and near, but no sooner was their curiosity satisfied than they fell under the gentle sway of the holy fathers. Thus, in time, the entire work of the mill was done by Indian neophytes, under the instruction of Franciscan priests.

Among a band of Indians which Father Antonio brought to the mission, was old Miguel and his son, Ricardo, half-breed Indians. Old Miguel's mother had been a Mexican woman, and he in turn had married a Mexican wife. Ricardo, the only child, was a bright, manly boy, ten years old, when he came with his father to San Gabriel. Old Miguel was proud of his boy, and proud of the fathers' interest in him. His intelligence and desire for knowledge, other than nature could teach him, often gave the fathers theme for much thought. Ricardo's ambition, gentleness and courage, were traits in his manly character which called for better blood than was supposed to run in the veins of a half-breed Indian.

Mariquita, the little daughter of Don Marcos, who lived not far from the mill, thought no one so brave and handsome as Ricardo. Twice he had saved her from drowning, and thereby gained the gratitude and good will of her father. In all her walks and rambles over the hills, Ricardo was now



THE OLD MILL, SAN GABRIEL, CAL.
Somewhat modernized by the addition of a portico

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her constant companion and willing slave. No flower of all the many he gathered for her was half so fair as she. She combined in gracefulness and sweetness, the beauty of them all. Early and late he gathered the lovely blossoms to lay at her feet, that she might revel in their gorgeous bloom, as would a brilliant butterfly, showing her seated on her floral throne, the most perfect flower of all that grew in the valley.

Their devotion to each other grew with the days, and no other life than the one they lived came to disturb them for many years. The freedom Mariquita enjoyed from all restraint was owing to an absolute and loving reign over her nurse, who could not deny to her darling child the wish to live among the birds and flowers, the ideal life her nature craved. Too well she knew the time was coming when, behind convent walls, her little heart would flutter like a caged bird for the freedom which she now enjoyed. By one excuse and another she had prevailed on Don Marcos not to place the child in school too soon.

"Don't restrain her yet awhile, Don Marcos," said the old nurse. "She is just a wild flower, who will droop and die in the confinement of school life."

So at fifteen, Mariquita, still uncaged, danced and sang and wandered over the hills with Ricardo, as she had done for years. When she began to creep into Ricardo's heart, he never knew, but

there she had grown, till his love for her was not less than that he felt for the Holy Mother. Pure and exalted, as of a being too good for this world, he enshrined her in his thoughts. Could his life go on forever as it had done, he would be content. The thought of mating himself with a creature so lovely as Mariquita, he had not dreamed was possible. No one of all the people who came to the Don's home was worthy enough to wear the flower of her love. He was not, and no other could appreciate her gentle and loving heart so well as he. But of the gulf which separated them, he never knew till now, when separation was so near.

Ricardo, with his noble nature, and opportunities at the mission school, was seldom reminded of his lowly birth. The respect which he and his father had ever received from the good padres, made him often forget his Indian blood, and his happy life in and about the old mill, with the gentle companionship of Mariquita, refined and ennobled a nature already superior to birth and circumstances.

The rude awakening came one day, when he was roughly told by one of the men that he was only a half-breed, and must not hope to mate with the daughter of a Don. Had Ricardo spoken of a separation to Mariquita, she would not have understood. He belonged to her and she belonged to him. Nothing could separate them. She laughed at the idea of her father sending her to school, and

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she would have laughed if any one had told her Ricardo was not her equal.

Ten happy years by his side had proved to her that he had no equal ; such foolish things as aristocratic birth and blue blood had never troubled her little head. And why need she go away to school ? She had teachers in the birds, trees and flowers, and what did she want to know of hateful books ? The sisters at the mission had taught her to read the prayer book, and that was enough. From Ricardo she had learned, oh, so many things ; she knew now more than any girl of her age, for Ricardo had taught her to whistle and trill as the birds do, and there was not a flower, tree or shrub that she could not tell by name. She knew every path through the mountains, and all the wild birds by their notes. She wished for no change — this life was enough for her.

But Don Marcos had other plans for his daughter's future than the wild life she chose to live, and on his next trip to Mexico he prepared her to go with him. Almost broken-hearted at parting with Ricardo and her nurse, Mariquita went away with her father and the sister who was to take care of her on the journey. Confident that she would resume the old life on coming home, the parting to her meant only a few short years, in which she would work hard at her books, the sooner to return.

To Ricardo the parting meant till death ; he could not live without her, and he could never hope

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to win her. He knew her heart was his now, but her hand he never could possess. Don Marcos would rather see his child dead than wedded to a half-breed. No hint of his great love for her must she ever know. The memory of their happy days he would treasure and think of her as one over whom the grave had closed.

Good Father Antonio, to whom he went with his troubles, counseled, advised and gave him all the comfort he could, but the birds and the flowers they both loved so well only knew the hard and bitter fight he had to forget her as living. Each night found him wandering over the hills, visiting the places sacred to them, and at each shrine he turned his face to the stars and prayed he might never see another morning. Thus never forgetting, but with memory keenly alive to all he had lost, he lived three years of a hermit's life, doing penance the while for daring to love above his station.

He must never see her more — her life on her return could not be like the old life, and she would never need him again. If it could be that he might die for her, how willingly he would give up his most wretched existence. Where he lived or how he lived, only old Miguel and Father Antonio ever knew, but they both prayed for him, and prayed that he soon might find the peace he craved.

To Mariquita, the one cry of her heart was: "Oh, for a day of freedom, to wander over the hills with Ricardo!" Like a caged bird she had

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endured her convent life, and as each day passed she counted it as one less between her and freedom. And now the time was drawing near, and the sister had been bidden to return with her to her California home. How joyfully she heard the news as the sister gave her the enclosed letter from her father, and bade her read it. She was too happy to read or think of anything but the meeting with Ricardo and her nurse, who was all the mother she had ever known. And the dear old mill, how she longed to hear the rumble of its clumsy machinery and the roar of the water from the spring as it dashed and sparkled over the wheels that turned it.

Dreamily she lived over the past till, reminded of her father's letter, laughing then at her forgetfulness, she opened it and glanced at the contents, and as she did so, all hope of a happy return to her home fled from her face.

Her father wrote that he had promised her hand to Don Pedro, and that every arrangement for her marriage to him on the day following her return home was made, after which she would sail with her husband to his place in Spain. Don Pedro was fabulously rich, he wrote, and she would have a princely home, and every wish gratified; he ended by saying she was a most fortunate girl to be loved by such a Croesus as Don Pedro.

Fortunate to be the wife of Don Pedro! It made her sick with terror to think of it. She

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remembered him on one of his visits to her father as a little old wrinkled man, who impressed her with a nameless fear when he tried to caress her. Far happier would she be to give her life to the Church, and she begged and implored the sisters in vain to place her in a convent for life. She knew her father would never refuse her to Don Pedro. He had sent her away to school when it had almost broken her heart, and he would not care for her pleadings now.

Sadly the sisters grieved for her, but they must do their duty and return her to her father. So, more heart-broken and hopeless than when she left, Mariquita returned to her father's house. Old nurse Luisa did not find her light-hearted, happy child in this sad-faced girl, who, speechless with grief, sank in her outstretched arms.

Mariquita had gained her freedom only to lose it — to lose it in a bondage worse to her than death. The little hope she had that Ricardo could be of help was gone, when she learned that he had not been seen about the mill for a year. Down on her knees she fell and cried aloud to the Holy Mother, and to Ricardo, living or dead, to help her.

Away up in the Sierra Madre Mountains, Ricardo, lying on the ground, and looking up at the stars, felt, rather than heard Mariquita's cry of distress.

"Mariquita needs me," he said, "I will go to her!" and hastening down the mountain side, he stopped not till at the close of the next day he

THE TRAGEDY AT THE OLD MILL

neared the mill, and reached the spot where they had parted three years before.

Accustomed to obedience in her convent life, Mariquita made no resistance when her nurse, on the evening after her return, arrayed her slight form in her bridal robes. If old Luisa had been dressing her darling child for the grave, she could not have had a harder task than was given her now.

Mariquita had wept and prayed till all hope was gone, so passively she let her nurse do with her as she chose, not seeming to notice why she was being decked in such rich attire. It was only when the nurse would have placed the bridal veil on her hair, that Mariquita aroused herself. Tearing it from her head, she threw it down, declaring she would die before they should marry her to old Don Pedro. Frightened at the state Mariquita was in, the nurse turned away to seek Don Marcos and implore him to relent. But even as her back was turned, a change came over the face of Mariquita — a change so swift and so great that it was really marvelous. She stopped in her frantic grief, and turned her head to one side as if listening, then springing to the door, she sent forth from her little throat the answer to the bird-call she had learned so well, and gathering her bridal robes about her, she fled through the door and along the well-known path to the mill. On she ran, her feet scarce touching the ground. Faster and faster, as if fearing pursuit,

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

she gained in speed till, panting for breath, she fell into Ricardo's arms.

"Save me, Ricardo, save me," she gasped.

Ricardo, folding her closely in his arms, silently carried her to a secret room in the mill, known only to himself and Father Antonio, and placing her within, returned to the mill entrance with a look on his face which meant that only over his dead body could they have her now. Of the nature of her trouble he had not heard, but the night before, on the mountain, her spirit voice had disclosed to him some great danger to her. That was enough for him to know.

In pursuit came her friends; they had seen her white dress as she bounded through the gloom of the night towards the mill, and they knew where to find her. That her trouble had temporarily deranged her, they each and all supposed, but when they saw Ricardo they knew it was he who had called her away. Burning with jealousy and mad with rage, Don Pedro rushed upon Ricardo, and not stopping to think of the dreadful crime he would commit, he plunged his knife into Ricardo's heart. As Ricardo sank down, a shriek was heard which rang over the mill, and Mariquita springing from her hiding place fell unconscious on the bleeding form of Ricardo, and her bridal garments were stained with his blood before the sound of her voice had ceased to echo in the room.

THE TRAGEDY AT THE OLD MILL

Tenderly her father removed her to her home, grief-stricken at the result of his selfish plans to wed her to Don Pedro's riches.

Don Pedro, insane with rage and a desire for more vengeance, was shunned by all the guests who knew and respected Ricardo and felt grief for his death.

Removing her blood-stained garments, old Luisa stood sobbing over the couch of the unconscious Mariquita.

"Let her alone, Don Marcos," said the old nurse, as she motioned him away, "let nature restore her, she is best so for the present."

Late in the night, life came back to Mariquita. She awakened as from a sweet sleep, then sat up and listened to songs of the night-birds, a light breaking over her face and beaming from her eyes.

"Ricardo is calling me," she said, "I will go to him."

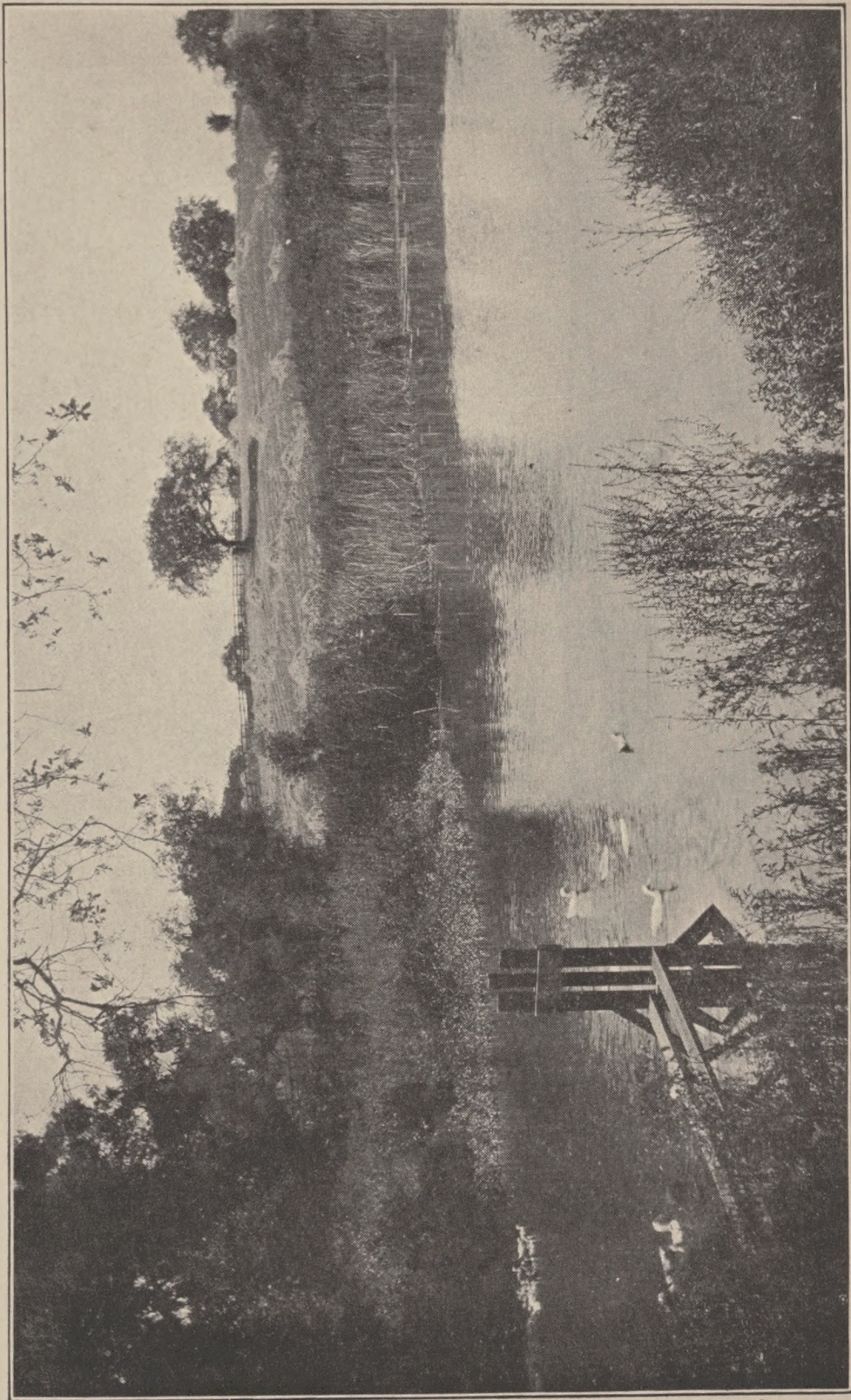
Softly stepping from the couch, so as not to awaken her sleeping nurse, she went out into the night again. Taking the same old path to the mill, and singing her bird-songs as she went along, laughing to herself as she saw each familiar object. Stopping to inhale the fragrance of the flowers that bloomed only for her, gently untangling the vines that lovingly sought to clasp her in their embrace as she passed them, and lingering over the places that brought back tender recollections of happy days, she, all the while laughing, chatting, calling

to the birds, and singing praises of thanksgiving, went on and on in the soft moonlight to meet Ricardo.

The next morning when search was made for Mariquita, they found her lying in the lake, among the reeds. Flowers were twined in her hair and clasped in her tiny hands. The happy smile that had not left her face, told all was well with her, as the nurse saw when she dressed her for her long sleep. With tears streaming down her aged face, old Luisa placed the dripping flowers in the form of a cross on Mariquita's white breast, all the while repeating to herself, "It is well with the child."

Old Miguel wandered away from the valley and was never seen again, but not before he was terribly avenged on the slayer of his son. Some said old Miguel had also pronounced a curse on the mill and all connected with it. However it was, prosperity did seem to desert the place. The water in the spring refused to flow, the Indian help sickened and died, and all the blossoms about the mill were streaked and splashed with red.

"It is the blood of innocence," the superstitious ones said, and to them the emblem was as sacred as the graves of Mariquita and Ricardo.



LAKE NEAR THE OLD MILL

AT THE SHRINE OF
SAN ANTONIO DE PALA

EARLY MASS AT
SAN CARLOS DEL CARMELO

*This early morn I gazed on Nature's face,
Around me in a dim and hazy light
Lay Mission fields ; adjoining on my right,
Built by the sons of a converted race,
San Carlos loomed in all its hallowed grace.
Above and from the south there came in sight,
Wild geese that northward flew in noisy flight,
Till in the misty air I lost their trace.
To hear the Padre read an early Mass,
The Indians came, and blest, then bending low
They prayed ; the service o'er, I saw them pass
To labor, walking single file and slow :
The mist had gone, like breath upon a glass,
For o'er the range appeared a crimson glow.*

—" Father Junipero Serra," Act I.

AT THE SHRINE OF SAN ANTONIO DE PALA

IT was a lovely winter day in Southern California, in the year 1846. The sun shone with almost the glimmering heat of July, and the air, which for days had been soft and balmy, coaxed and encouraged countless buds to unfold their leaves, till now the gardens were one brilliant display of bloom. In an ancient, adobe ranch home, not far from the San Luis Rey Mission, every door and window was open to admit the warm air and bright sunshine. The golden sunlight lay in broad patches on the uneven floors of the rooms and penetrated the thick, leafy screen made by the climbing rose which shaded one end of the long veranda. This rose-tree, venerable as the walls over which it threw its long branches, was loaded with a wealth of white flowers, the perfume from which scented the air and was wafted through the open windows into the house by the light breeze which at intervals gently moved the boughs to and fro. With each gust of wind there came a shower of rose leaves, which fluttered softly down on the floor of the veranda like flakes of snow. Not a sound had been heard about the house for some time; the stillness and peacefulness of contentment seemed to pervade the

place ; the singing of birds and the buzzing of bees as they flew in and out of the rose thicket near the dwelling, were the only sounds to be heard without.

In the shaded part of the court, under the roses, a lovely boy of two years was sleeping in a hammock, which was being lazily swung by an old Mexican woman who sat near, and who herself seemed half asleep. The child's chubby little hands were full of crushed and moist rose leaves which he had amused himself by catching as, blown by the wind, they fell all about him, till, tired of his play, he had fallen asleep. While the baby slept the white blossoms, still drifting, wove a fairy cover for him, almost burying the child in their scented leaves. His wavy, dark hair could just be seen under the white crown, and his breath, as it rose and fell, stirred the petals all about his dimpled face. Art could not contrive a picture half so perfect or with the exceeding loveliness of the one which nature here presented to the eyes of the beautiful mother of the sleeping infant as she came noiselessly through the door, and stopped to gaze on the fairy scene. Her dress of some soft, white material, with clusters of bright red blossoms at her throat, softened her rich, Spanish beauty, which, in a gayer costume, would have been too brilliant for such rural surroundings.

As she bent to kiss the sleeping child she scattered the white leaves from his face, and in their

AT THE SHRINE OF SAN ANTONIO DE PALA

place there fell a petal from the flowers she wore at her neck. "It looks like a drop of blood," she exclaimed, as she hastily brushed it away. "Do you think we shall hear bad news, Marta? I dreamed of Leonardo last night, and I thought he looked so ill. I cannot drive the unfavorable impression it made from my mind."

Thus addressed, old Marta slowly aroused herself and muttered, "Blood, blood, I see nothing but blood. It is on your dress, child."

With a scream of fright the young mother looked about her, and as she saw the red blossoms she frantically tore them from her dress and threw them on the ground. They fell among the white rose leaves, and to her horrified gaze appeared more like drops of blood than ever. "O this cruel war," she moaned, as she clasped her startled babe to her breast. "Holy Mother, how can I bear it? Unsay those dreadful words, Marta; you were only dreaming, say you only did it to frighten me," she implored. But Marta sadly shook her head. Her reputation for foretelling events was too great among the people for her young mistress to doubt her now when she saw the sad look on the woman's face. Old Marta worshipped the child and loved the mother and would willingly give her life for them, and to cause her such sorrow now wrung the fond nurse's heart with pain. She sank at the feet of her mistress and begged her to be brave and bear her troubles for the sake of the child.

The poor child, so rudely awakened, did not understand it at all. He was used to smiles, not tears, when he opened his beautiful eyes. He turned from his mother to the nurse with a frightened look, then great tears rolled down his face and his little body shook with sobs; seeing this his mother hushed her grief to comfort him. She took from her neck a gold chain, to which was suspended a miniature of her husband. This she held to the child to show him the picture of his father and herself, painted just after they were married. How happy they both looked, she thought, and would they ever be so happy again? Sadly she closed the case and fastened the chain about the child's neck. "You shall wear it to-day, darling," she said, "it is papa's picture; I am afraid we shall never see him more."

Not quite a year had gone by since her husband, dressed in the picturesque costume of Pico's lancers, had gone to the defence of his country. She saw him ride away with such pain at her heart as only a woman can know. Since then she had lived in constant terror of bad news. But the young Señora was a brave woman and worthy to be the wife of a soldier. Courageously she had insisted on staying in her home, though she knew it was unsafe while her country was in such an unsettled state, but since the death of old Marta's only son, who had been killed by some lawless usurpers, the nurse's prophecy that they would all

AT THE SHRINE OF SAN ANTONIO DE PALA

meet the same fate, had made her nervous and fearful of the result of the trouble which met her people on all sides.

What would the end be, she often asked herself. If any harm should come to Leonardo, she and baby would be left alone amid the strife of those hazardous times when no life was safe, and rapine and murder were committed almost in sight of her own door. How could the flowers bloom and the sun shine and nature look so undisturbed when there was such danger menacing their lives and their homes? As she looked over their broad acres and saw the growing trees her husband had helped to plant, and in which he took such pride, her heart cried out in anguish for the return of the few short years of their happy, married life.

"I cannot endure this suspense, Marta," said the young Señora, bravely suppressing her emotions, "I must know if there be tidings of a battle. It has been weeks since I have heard from Leonardo. I will have one of the men ride to San Diego for news." But even as she spoke there came in view a horse and rider, the jaded appearance of both, as they came up the shaded avenue, showing the hard work done by man and beast on the long journey they had come without stopping for rest. The young soldier, dismounting, almost fell from the saddle with fatigue, and with difficulty moved his stiffened limbs up the veranda steps and approached the Señora, who, with her child

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

still in her arms, had, since her first glimpse of the horseman, stood as if unable to move or speak. It was the nurse who spoke and asked if he brought news.

"Yes," he answered, "I have just come from San Pasquale with a letter from Captain Leonardo Parilla to the Señora."

With a cry of joy the young mother dropped the child in the hammock and reached for the letter. Yes, Leonardo was alive, and well, but he wrote that they were on the eve of an encounter with the enemy, and he asked the Señora to implore the saints to spare his life, and if her prayers were answered, he would be with her in a few days. If not, and he should fall in the defence of his country, he wished her to take Marta and old Juan and return to Mexico. He asked for a line in return, and begged her, as did old Marta, to bravely bear her troubles for the sake of little Leon.

"When do you return, Señor?" said the young Señora, forcing herself to speak bravely.

"My orders, Señora, are to return at once if I can procure a fresh horse, for this poor beast is tired out."

"Marta will see that you are furnished with food and a good horse, Señor, while I prepare my message to Captain Parilla," answered the Señora, as she went to her room.

A short time later she watched, with Marta, the messenger's departure till he was lost to sight

AT THE SHRINE OF SAN ANTONIO DE PALA

among the hills, then calmly turning to her nurse she said that old Raquel, the Indian woman who often came to the house, had told her the night before that the saints would grant the prayers of any one who would pray at midnight in the chapel of San Antonio de Pala. "We will go there to-night, Marta, and I will ask the blessed saints to watch over Leonardo and spare his life. Little Leon will go with us, and Juan will drive. Juan knows the road well, he tells me, and says if we start early we can reach there before the midnight hour."

"But the danger, my child," exclaimed old Marta, "it is a rough road and the country is full of bad Indians and drunken white men. It is too perilous to consider! We will be murdered before morning if we follow this superstitious Indian custom. The blessed saints will grant our prayers at San Luis Rey Mission as readily as they will at the deserted old ruins of San Antonio de Pala," said Marta, arousing from her sorrowful forebodings when she found her darlings were in peril. In vain old Marta protested against taking the child on such a hazardous journey as night would make it.

"The saints will protect us, Marta," said her mistress. "We are unsafe here as well as there while this country is overrun by lawless men. Juan came to tell me this morning that several head of cattle were driven from our place last night and slaughtered. And who are here to protect us

if we were attacked? None but a few old men. These friends are too old for their country's service, faithful as they are to us, they would be helpless in time of danger. But do not fear trouble to-night, Marta. I have asked the Holy Mother to watch over us, and she will keep us from all harm. Our precious Leon will be as safe under her watchful care as he would be in his own little bed. Bad and wicked men do not go near those sacred places at night, for they would be in terror of the just wrath of the sainted ones."

When old Marta found her mistress was determined to go on a pilgrimage to San Antonio de Pala, she went grumblingly about her preparations to make the lumbering old carrita as comfortable as possible for the long night's ride. Baby Leon, left alone in his hammock, continued gleefully to play with the shower of rose leaves, all unconscious of trouble, as he chatted his baby talk to the birds and flowers, while great was his delight when he found he could swing himself by his own little efforts.

Just as the day was declining the little party started on their long journey, but each in a different state of mind from the other. Old Juan, resigned to whatever his beloved mistress wished him to do; the child curious and pleased with the novelty of a ride in the old cart; and Marta rebellious and grumbling, denouncing Indians in general and old Raquel in particular for putting such

AT THE SHRINE OF SAN ANTONIO DE PALA

superstitious notions in the head of the young Señora. The young Señora, in the meantime, was not disturbed by her nurse's misgivings. She knew Marta loved her and she believed Marta was more convinced than she would like to own, that their mission to the chapel would prove a blessing, but she had ruled her darling mistress too many years to meekly submit to the interference of old Raquel without a murmur.

With perfect faith that constant prayer and the intercession of San Antonio de Pala would save her husband's life in the coming battle, the Señora Parilla, with bowed head and a rosary in her hands, sat breathing prayer after prayer of supplication to that saint. And the soft, sweet music of the vesper bells, plainly heard as they neared San Luis Rey, seemed to their anxious hearts like a benediction from heaven. It was long past little Leon's bed-time, but sleep did not easily come to his wakeful eyes, which grew larger and more unblinking as the darkness came on. He saw the stars for the first time in his short life, and gazed at them with wonder in his face. This was a new entertainment for him and he did not intend to miss any of it if he could help it. It was a beautiful world to live in, roses by day, and thousands of tiny lamps by night,—of course, they were all for him, and he reached up his little hands to catch them as he did for the rose leaves, while the question in his eyes, that his baby lips could not form, as he looked at

the horses, at old Juan, whose pet he was, and then back to his mother and his nurse, said as plainly as they could speak, "What does it all mean?" By and by his eye-lids grew heavy and after many attempts to keep them open he gave up the fight and slept as peacefully in Marta's arms as he would have done in his hammock.

Clasping the child closely to her, as if to shield him from harm, Marta sat silently thinking. She could not shake off the gloomy feeling which had oppressed her for days, and she trembled with fear when the air grew colder and the fog settled about them. The peaceful scene of the early morning came into her mind and she contrasted it with the darkness and terrors of coming danger which appeared to menace them. The old carrita, worn and unfit for the journey, threatening every moment to come apart, plunged after the horses and swayed from side to side on the hilly road like a ship in a storm, while Marta, holding fast the child with one hand, steadied herself with the other.

"The child should have been left at home," she moaned to herself, "His mother is crazed with grief and did not know what she was doing. Why did I obey her?" she cried in anguish, as the night grew darker and a mist began to fall. It was a wild and desolate country through which they were passing. Occasionally could be heard the howling of coyotes in some adjacent cañon, and, to add to their fears, there now sounded the roar of

AT THE SHRINE OF SAN ANTONIO DE PALA

the mountain lions, which at night came down the wild gorges in search of prey. The knowledge of their nearness increased the alarm and anxiety of both Juan and Marta, but their mistress appeared not to heed the danger, so intent was she with her prayers.

The creaking and groaning of the cart, as it lumberingly strained over the rough places in the road, was a grewsome accompaniment to the cries of the wild beasts, as they passed along. Marta's arms grew cramped, holding the child so many hours. She finally wrapped him in blankets and placed him on pillows in the bottom of the cart, then settled herself back in her seat and drew her shawl closely about her to keep out the dampness and chillness that penetrated to her benumbed and stiffened limbs, causing her to shiver with cold.

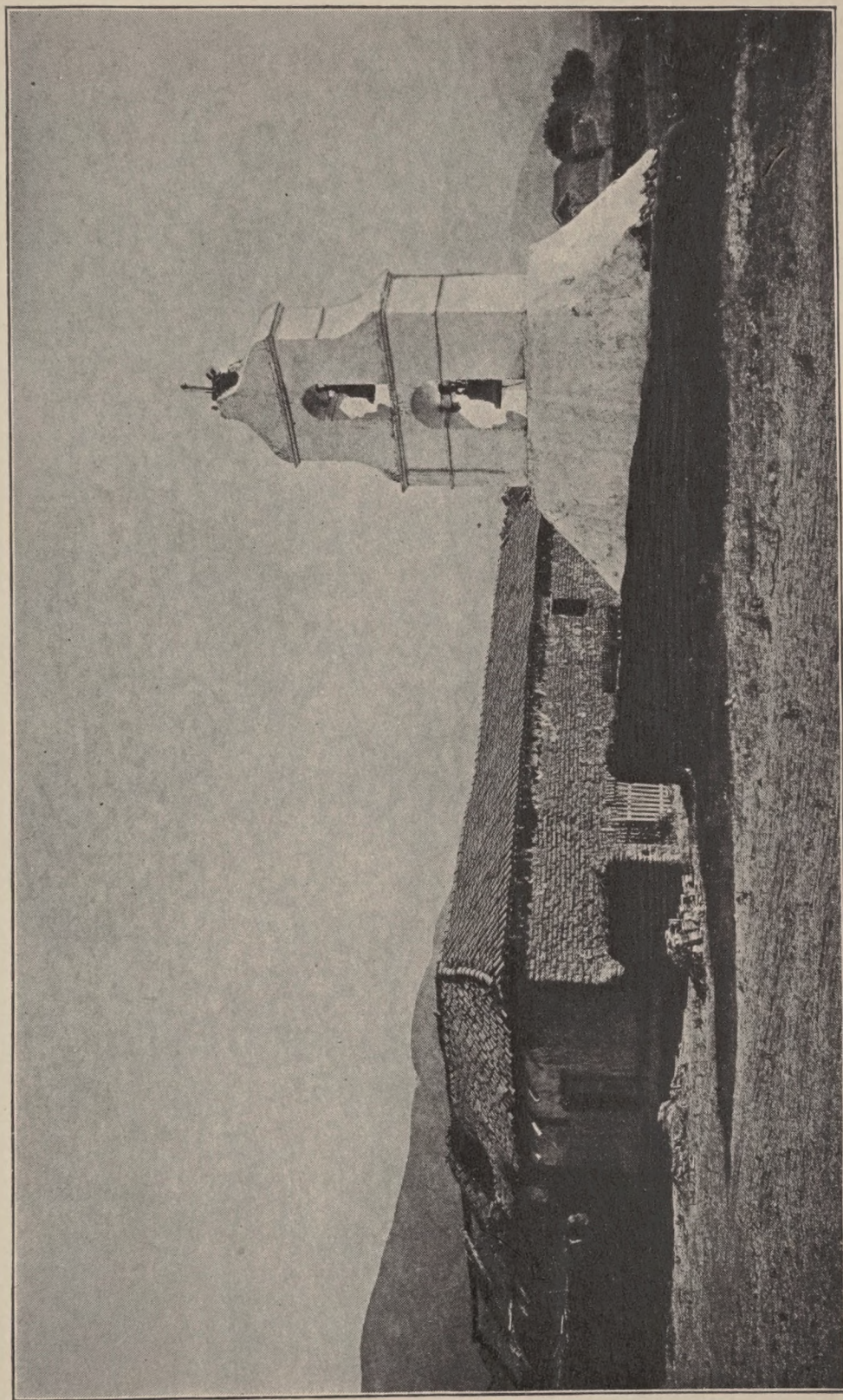
Thus in silence they finished the remainder of their journey. Old Marta, resigned now to her fate, repeated her prayers and gazed with tearful eyes at her mistress, whom she could just discern by the light of the carrita lantern. As they neared the old ruins of San Antonio de Pala they could see the belfry tower as, dimly outlined in its ghostly garment of fog, it loomed spectrally before them, and when they alighted from the cart at the entrance of the ruins, and made their way over the broken tiles towards the chapel, Juan and Marta breathed a prayer of thankfulness that the journey, with its attendant horrors, was over, and that here among

the blessed saints they would be secure from all harm.

A swarm of bats attracted from the ruins by the light, circled and swayed about the lantern which Juan held high above his head as he preceded the little party into the chapel. After him walked his mistress, devoutly repeating her prayers, while old Marta, with stiffened limbs, stumbled along over the uneven places with little Leon in her arms.

The Señora Parilla, who moved as one inspired, entered the chapel and went direct to the figure of San Antonio de Pala, the patron saint of the mission, and threw herself in supplication before that image. Placing the sleeping child within the hallowed space surrounding the saint, Juan and Marta dropped on their knees beside their mistress and fervently besought San Antonio to spare to them their beloved master, of whom they were so proud.

When the first faint light of dawn penetrated the gloomy place, the Señora Parilla arose from her knees and clasped her sleeping child to her breast, then awakened Juan and Marta, who from old age and exhaustion had fallen asleep while engaged in their devotions. As the old couple aroused from their slumbers on the stone floor, they looked with holy awe on the saintly expression which illumined the face of their beloved mistress. "Leonardo's life is spared to me, dear friends," she said. "The blessed San Antonio has answered my prayers. Let us now sing his praise in a sunrise hymn."



MISSION SAN ANTONIO DE PALA

Founded 1816

AT THE SHRINE OF SAN ANTONIO DE PALA

With happy hearts the old servants joined with their mistress in singing the morning hymn, and as they sang the fear of coming evil which had haunted them for days was swept away by their trust in the promise of the saint. Many years had passed since such a song of praise had been heard within the walls of that sacred edifice, and as the music of their voices echoed far and wide, it appeared to them as though the chapel was peopled with the spirits of by-gone worshipers, who united to swell the chorus to its patron saint. When they emerged from its gloomy recesses and came into the gray light of early morning, the birds took up the sunrise hymn and joyously caroled forth their praises to the new-born day.

The rosy glow in the east, the herald of the rising sun, was spreading broader and higher, while tearing apart the misty veil of fog that covered its face. Jaggedly here and there the gray fringe hung over the hill-tops, while down in the valley it still lay white and cold, like great billows of sea-foam. How changed from the gloom and terrors of night was the promise in all of this! Bathed and refreshed in the misty garment which had wrapped it so closely in its period of rest, nature was now slowly assuming its dress of various tints.

To the Señora Parilla this seemed not unlike the change that had come to her, in her long night of prayer. Cleansed from all doubt, with hope renewed, she felt that a new and brighter day had

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

dawned for her. Thus it was, with a look of heaven-sent peace shining on her face, that the young Señora, who had gone in perfect faith to the shrine of San Antonio de Pala, began her journey home.

THE MYSTERY OF LA SOLEDAD

MISSION SANTA CRUZ

*How swiftly here oblivion set her seal!
What has the vanished century left of each —
The Spanish roof-tree and the Spanish speech —
The music and the roses of Castile?
A newer generation comes to kneel
Where crumbling walls and broken tiles of red
Became the dust above forgotten dead —
The unregarded dust beneath the wheel.
The call to vespers hath a different tone;
Even the mission bells were cast anew,
And alien echoes mingle with their own
From crowded streets, where once the wild flowers grew.
New speech, new shrines, new hopes and cares and fears,
To usher in another hundred years.*

— S. E. Anderson in "The Californian."

THE MYSTERY OF LA SOLEDAD

“OUR Lady of Solitude,” from whom the Mission La Soledad derives its name, could, if she chose to return to earth, walk among the ruins of that old structure in solitude as profound as that which reigns in the sepulchers of the dead. Many years have passed since the spirit that animated the place had fled, and yet a halo of departed glory still pervades the atmosphere of the desolate spot.

About the crumbling walls of the old chapel, there breathes forth a romantic air of mystery impressively sad, to one turning the leaves of the past and beholding in perfected beauty this monument of ruins ; once a prosperous mission, now a deserted and lonely spot with few traces to show where had stood the adobe walls which willing hands erected so long ago.

During the early years that Padre Florencio Ybanez served at the mission there came from Monterey to La Soledad a wealthy Spanish gentleman, Don Vincenti Estrada, with his wife and young daughter, Señorita Catalina.

Don Vincenti invested much money in large tracts of land and devoted the greater part of his time to cattle raising, the chief industry of the

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

Spanish land owner of that epoch. The Don was proud of his handsome wife and daughter and built for them a fine adobe house not far from the mission, for the Señora Estrada had expressed the wish to live within sound of the mission bells. There surrounded by all the comforts that wealth could procure in those early days, the family of Don Vincenti and its numerous servants, heard every peal of the holy bells as they proclaimed their sacred message far and wide.

With her daughter happily married and living by her side, the Señora Estrada said she would wish for nothing more than a continuance of their ideal existence. The distance from Monterey was not so great but that some of her friends from there constantly shared her hospitality; thus between going and coming from one ranch house to another the social life of La Soledad was kept alive by the young Dons and Señoritas.

Among the frequent visitors to the home of Don Vincenti Estrada was their handsome young neighbor, Don Ramon Valasco, who was the accepted suitor of the fair Catalina.

Passionately devoted was Don Ramon to Don Vincenti's lovely daughter, while she, with a depth of affection for him alone, had promised to become his bride on her seventeenth birthday.

Wealth and the consent of both families of the happy pair were theirs. Not alone the sanction of the parents, but all the friends, in and about La

THE MYSTERY OF LA SOLEDAD

Soledad, showed their loving interest in their approaching nuptials, for the devotion of the lovers had been a pleasant theme of gossip on every tongue for months. Don Estrada's daughter was called by the mission Indians "Santa Catalina." They loved her for her kindness to them in sickness and trouble and there was not one but would risk his life to save her from harm. No fairer promise of happiness ever dawned for mortals than was shown by this evidence of devotion from all, creating as it did a radiance of love about Don Ramon and Catalina Estrada.

Don Ramon was the nephew of Padre Ybanez, and many of the good qualities for which the padre was so beloved were found in his nephew. Thus a double interest centered about Don Ramon in the minds of the neophytes; he was the nephew of their kind padre and he would wed their beautiful "Santa Catalina."

A happy future was predicted for the lovers and fondly hoped for by all the mission people. As the time drew near for the wedding the interest of their friends deepened, and in a hundred ways they manifested their regard. Padre Ybanez asked no greater happiness than to unite still closer these two whom he most loved. He had known Catalina from her birth and gave her the name she bore at her baptism. The name was dear to Padre Ybanez; it was his mother's name and the name of his birth-place in Spain.

A golden chain and jeweled cross was the padre's wedding and birthday gift to Catalina; and when he placed it about her neck she vowed to wear it as long as she lived. Ramon's gift was a jeweled locket with his miniature enclosed, that she said would find a resting place on her heart while in life, and at her death it should be buried with her.

Catalina's birthday dawned clear and bright and no finer prospect for a happy ending ever greeted a bride.

Don Vincenti said they would celebrate his daughter's birthday first, and at the close of the day's festivities her marriage to Don Ramon would take place at the mission church. "By this means," he said, "the two events would be happily enjoyed by all." Very lovely were her bridal robes of soft white silk with tracings of embroidery as delicate as the finest lace. Her jewels were family treasures, priceless and rare, and had decked many a bride in Spain in other days.

Rare and costly and beautiful as were all her wedding gifts, Catalina prized still more the love and good will of all her friends. The happy event of her marriage was attended with no sad thoughts of parting from them, for her new home, like her old, would still be within sound of the mission bells, which to her was music far sweeter than any she had ever heard. The sun never shone on a happier day for the neophytes of La Soledad than this one of the wedding with its attendant festivities.

THE MYSTERY OF LA SOLEDAD

They were to have a holiday and help to make glad the birth and wedding day of their "Santa Catalina."

Long before the break of day bonfires were built and kept brightly burning. The wedding bells at intervals pealed forth joyful notes of gladness, sending their sweet sounds far over the valley, and proclaiming near and far the happy event to take place in the mission chapel at the vesper hour. Custom and conventionality were thrown aside and the neophytes were bidden to celebrate the occasion as best suited their ideas of a tribute to the fair bride.

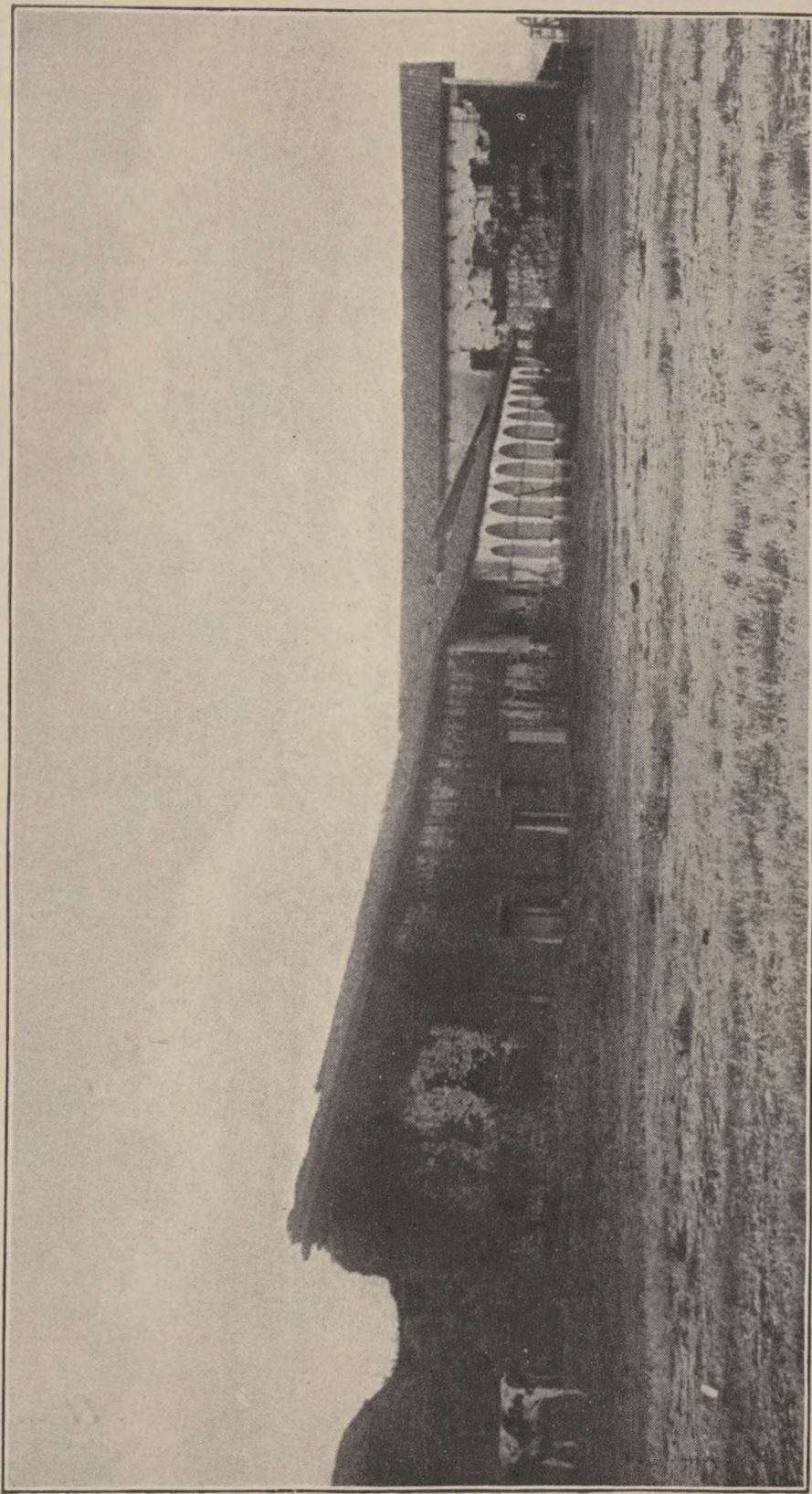
All day long guests were arriving, more than the Don's spacious mansion could hold, so many of the visitors were glad to avail themselves of the mission quarters. As night approached the still brightly burning fires lighted up the grounds about the Don's house, but cast dark shadows beyond the line of light, with weird effect, to the mission buildings.

Catalina had told her Indian friends she would come out among them in her wedding garments a short time before going to the chapel; for the chapel she knew would not hold the half of those gathered about the brightly leaping flames of ever-green boughs.

To disappoint those who had been rejoicing for her all day, she could not do, so she overruled her parents' objections to the ill-omened custom of

appearing in her wedding dress before the appointed hour of her marriage, and thus appareled she greeted her dusky friends, standing alone with the bright fire-light at times staining the pure whiteness of her bridal robes a deep red, or flashing wickedly here and there over her wedding garments as if in derision of their spotless purity.

Like some goddess of fire she stood for a moment watching the leaping flames, her jewels flashing forth colors more brilliant and burning than the fire, as they blazed and sparkled on her neck and arms. No one of her guests who saw her standing there bathed in the changing lights ever forgot the picture she made. Some of them turned their eyes away and crossed themselves, saying it boded no good to brave a custom as old as the hills about them. Even Ramon was affected and taking the hand of Catalina he led her back to the house, thus breaking the spell which had shaken them all with fear of coming sorrow. Catalina laughed at their superstitions and asked what harm could come of so innocently braving what seemed to her a foolish custom, when to make others happy was of so much more importance. After reassuring them that no harm could come from so kind an act, Catalina said she wished to be alone for a few moments; she would go to her room and there kneeling before the image of the Holy Virgin ask her to bless her coming years as she had blessed her bridal day. Very beautiful she looked as she



MISSION SAN MIGUEL

Founded July 25, 1797

THE MYSTERY OF LA SOLEDAD

stood for a moment fondly caressing her father, with the light of love and happiness shining in her eyes and beaming lovingly on all about her.

"My 'Santa Catalina,'" said her father, tenderly, using the name given her by her Indian friends, "you are a jewel more precious and beautiful to me than the historic gems that clasp your neck and arms, for they are but the setting to this rarer gem which sheds such a love light over the hearts of your many friends." Leading her then to her room the Don parted from her, praying that the blessings of the Holy Mother would rest upon his child.

At the vesper hour the chapel was filled with wedding guests and the groom waited at the altar, momentarily looking for the lovely bride and her people. The bells were merrily ringing, the fires were still brightly burning. Slowly the wedding hour passed, moments came and went and yet no bride appeared to greet the eyes of her impatient bridegroom.

But at the home of Don Vincenti Estrada all was confusion and grief, his darling child not many moments from his side, was strangely absent. She was not to be found in her room or about the house or grounds, and messengers were hurriedly sent to the mission church with the sad tidings of her disappearance. Their arrival with such heart breaking and startling news almost paralyzed for the moment Ramon, the waiting bridegroom, and Padre Ybanez.

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

They were at first unwilling to believe such a horrible message, until it was confirmed by others bringing the same cruel report. With their horrified guests they quickly left the church and began the search for Catalina. Bonfires were left to die out while the neophytes with one accord sought everywhere for their beloved "Santa Catalina." The house, the grounds, the mission quarters, the chapel, the Indian huts, every place, all places were searched as word passed from one terrified person to another that Catalina had been spirited away.

All through the long night they sought in vain for some trace of the missing bride, and when the morning broke fair and smiling it revealed to the grief-stricken friends nothing to comfort them. All that day and the following night searching parties went without rest or food while seeking the lost girl, till nature refused unaided to do more. Days passed into weeks and now most of the guests had returned to their homes worn out with grief, toil and sleepless nights, but yet the search was not abandoned.

All the seaport towns were visited and all outgoing vessels carefully searched. Powerful friends from Monterey lent their aid and word was sent to all the ports where ships from the California coast were likely to touch, to watch the landing of all passengers. Tireless were the efforts of the mission Indians in going over every foot of the ground within miles of La Soledad, in search of a hiding

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place where Catalina's abductors could have concealed her, willingly aiding all in their power, but no sign could they discover with all their cunning where she was, or how the lovely girl had been taken from her home. Weeks passed into months, months into years, before the afflicted parents and bereaved lover received a sign from Catalina; and that sign when it came only deepened the mystery of her disappearance as well as confirmed them in the belief of her death.

After the night of his great sorrow, Ramon had become a changed and heart-broken man, and when several years had gone by he still mourned his lost love. Wandering alone over the hills he would spend days calling on her to make some sign that she still lived, oftentimes spending the night where darkness overtook him, with nothing but the earth for a bed. On one such night Ramon awakened suddenly from a dream which moved him strangely; he felt the presence of Catalina as he never had done in any of his dreams of her before. Yes, he felt some message from her would surely come. So impressed was he with this sign that he arose and calmly waited the next step she would have him take. There soon came to him an impulse to follow a light which seemed to entice him on towards the mission. Always just in front of him it moved, lighting his way faintly at first, then growing brighter as it neared the place, till it rested over the chapel of La Soledad.

Never doubting for a moment but that the spirit of his lost love was guiding him, Ramon, in obedience to this controlling power, passed into the church which was dark and deserted. As he did so, the light which had preceded him through the darkness to this holy place, appeared and moved directly to the image of the patron saint of La Soledad. Ramon stood entranced by the bright light which hovered near the saint, and as he continued to gaze, the light appeared to his eyes to assume the form of his lost bride Catalina. With her white arms lifted he saw her take from her neck the chain of gold and the jeweled cross, the gift of Padre Ybanez, and place it at the feet of "Our Lady of Solitude." Then taking the jeweled locket, his last gift to her, from her bosom she pressed it to her lips and to her heart, while a resigned and heavenly smile parted her lips and moved them as if in prayer. At this, over the spiritually lovely face there settled a look of perfect peace and happiness. Suddenly reaching her arms towards Ramon, she moved nearer to him, then paused, and pointing upwards, quickly faded from sight. As the vision faded, the spell which held Ramon was broken, and springing forward he vainly tried to grasp the receding light which quickly vanished, leaving the chapel in darkness. Falling on his knees before the saint, he cried aloud for a return of the heavenly vision, but only a faint sound of distant music answered his cry.

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When Ramon took Catalina's cross to her parents and told them she had passed away, they said they knew she had gone, for her pure spirit in passing had appeared to them some days before, to comfort them in their great sorrow.

Catalina's dying request that some token of her death should be sent to La Soledad, must have been respected, but her friends never questioned that the jeweled cross reached there by other means than by the help of the spirit form of Catalina. Many were the tales told in whispers of her frequent visits to the sanctuary and at the home of her parents, and when bells were heard ringing at night, the mission people crossed themselves and said they were phantom wedding bells calling the bride.

After the vision confirming the death of Catalina, Ramon gave his wealth and devotion to the Church. He in time, took holy vows, and became a priest of the Order of St. Francis, and, as Father Sanches, served with his assistant at the mission of La Soledad for many years, the place where he had lived through his happiest days and bitterest sorrow. Padre Ybanez had died some time before and the friends of the good old padre were glad to welcome as their parish priest the nephew, whom they all so loved.

Gradually had peace and happiness come to Ramon's troubled mind, for as Padre Sanches, his devotion to the mission work left him no time for

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sad or brooding thoughts of the past. The saintly spirit of his lost bride, in whose memory he had dedicated his life to the church, hovered ever near, arousing interest and filling his heart with devotion and love for the work allotted to him. Aided also by the help and great wealth of Don Vincenti Estrada and his wife, hundreds of savage souls were made happy and helped to see the light of Christianity ; thus they built, by many kind acts, a lasting monument to their "Santa Catalina."

In answer to the constant prayers of Señora Estrada, that some day she might find the resting place of her daughter, there came an answer to her fervent pleadings. But more strange, more startling and more mysterious than was the abduction of her darling child in life, was the return, in death, of the earthly remains of Catalina. A few years after the cross had been left in the chapel of La Soledad the people of the mission were awakened one night by the bells tolling for a death, and yet none had occurred. Solemnly sounded the funeral notes with no visible hand near the bells. Lights were also seen moving about the church by some of the brothers who feared to move from their cells lest some dreadful fate should overtake them.

But when morning dawned it was discovered that a new grave had been made near the chapel wall and hastily covered, while all traces that could have told by whom it was done were carefully removed.

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Father Sanches, fearing some crime had thus been hidden, had the grave opened, and to his amazement he discovered not the roughly made burial case like those in use at the mission and made by the neophytes, but a casket richly carved and of foreign wood and make.

When brought into the chapel, he found engraved on the small silver plate the one word, "Catalina," and the date of her death, a few years before. Within the casket there remained but the precious dust of the once lovely girl, wrapped in the dress of a Sister of "St. Francis." Placed above the silent heart in the folds of the robe, was a jewelled charm enclosing the miniature of Don Ramon, which Catalina said should be buried with her. Fallen over her face like a veil was her beautiful hair mercifully concealing from her friends the changes her long sleep had wrought.

With impressive service and a mass for the repose of her soul, the remains of Catalina were reinterred in the mission cemetery, and there undisturbed she slept through the many and varied changes that came to La Soledad. It was a comfort to the bereaved parents to know that by her side they could rest when time called them to join her. Still nothing but a blank wall of mystery continued to surround the disappearance of Catalina, deepened more and more by the return of her beloved remains so quietly and strangely to her home.

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Every known effort to solve the mystery had been repeatedly made. Long and carefully, near and far, was the search continued for years. No motive for the abduction was ever known. Surrounded by hundreds of her friends she had dropped from their midst, and left no trace.

Stranger happenings may have occurred but none fraught with so much grief and sorrow to so many hearts. The shock to Father Sanches, on beholding the remains of Catalina in the casket, would have been his death, had he not been upheld by a stronger power than he had known when he first felt her loss. After a long night of prayer, kneeling before the Saint where he had seen her spirit form, he arose comforted and with strength given him to continue his holy work for many long years.

There was one more link to be added to the chain of this weird drama, one more happening which deepened still further the mystery of La Soledad. It occurred years after the finding of Catalina's grave, near the mission wall, years in which the incident had faded from the minds of all but Padre Sanches and a few old people, for the parents of Catalina were long since sleeping by her side. Late one dark and stormy night Padre Sanches was about leaving the chapel for his place of rest when he observed an old Indian woman bent almost double with the weight of years, and evidently a stranger to La Soledad, coming slowly

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towards him from the dark shadows near the chapel entrance. The padre had not seen or heard her enter but paused a moment to know what she wished on such a wild night and at so late an hour.

As the aged woman neared the padre she fell on her knees and began mumbling in a jargon of the Spanish and Indian tongues, a confession; but failing in her efforts to impress the father with her muttering words, she tried by signs and motions to make him understand that she wished him to take charge of a package which she held clasped tightly to her. Having accomplished her object she arose from her knees and left the church as silently as she had entered it. Padre Sanches took the package to his cell and looked long and carefully at the outer wrappings. The bundle had evidently lain unopened for years. It was securely bound about with the skin of some wild animal, and in the manner usually adopted by the Indians when wishing to preserve some sacred relic of their tribe.

A strange feeling of reluctance to open the package almost tempted the padre to leave it untouched and bury it from sight. But a presentiment that another page in the mystery of La Soledad was about to be turned for him, urged him on, against his will, as with shaking fingers he cut the cords which held it.

And so it proved, for on taking off several wrappings there were exposed to his horrified gaze what once were the dainty wedding garments of his lost

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bride Catalina, now yellow with age and soiled and torn in many places, showing the poor girl had struggled hard for her liberty the night she was spirited away.

Each article was daintily marked with the name Catalina. How well Ramon remembered her calling his attention to her name so delicately wrought on a silken scarf which she ofttimes wore about her head, and now, here in his hands lay the stained relic of those happy days. Bitter memories of the past arose tearing anew the partly healed wound in his heart, which the finding of her grave had caused, piercing it again and again as each article passed through his hands, in searching for some light on the mystery, but nothing to help him solve the dark secret of her disappearance could he find. Wild with grief Ramon fell on his knees and implored the saints to keep him from going mad, for never had mortal man been so tried and wounded as he. Scattered among the garments were the jewels Catalina had worn, showing her ornaments and clothing had been hastily torn off and exchanged for a dress which would disguise her and escape notice.

All her jewels were there but the cross and the locket, those the poor bride must have fought for or pleaded to retain about her neck. After a night spent in sorrow too sacred for mortal eyes to behold, Ramon felt again the peace which only supplication to the saints could give, and as Padre Sanches once

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more, he left his cell and with the help of his people sought about the mission and village of La Soledad for the old Indian woman, but nothing could be learned. No one had seen her come, no one had seen her go.

Many there were who doubted that such a person had ever been seen about the mission. They said it was the uneasy and evil spirit of Old Barbara, a half-breed Indian woman, a most wicked old hag, of whom it was said when living, that she was possessed of the Evil One. She did not belong to the Mission of La Soledad but visited there often during the early years that Padre Ybanez had charge of the place. She said she came to visit her brother Diego, but long before Catalina's birthday Old Barbara and Diego had left La Soledad and never returned. Old Barbara had boasted that she did not belong to a mission, so no one ever knew from whence she came.

Some there were who believed that Old Barbara and her brother had been instrumental in carrying off Catalina, but when sought for it was said they had both died at a neighboring mission of the fever. Yet in the minds of the more superstitious ones it was believed that her evil spirit could do more harm out of the body than in it, and that she was to blame for all the misfortunes that had come to La Soledad.

Whether it were true or not, that either in, or out, of the flesh Old Barbara had carried off

Catalina, it was not proved. Nothing could be found to any way connect them with the abduction. Padre Sanches visibly aged after so many probings to his unhealed wound, and one morning not many months after the visit of the old Indian woman, he was found kneeling before the image of "Our Lady of Solitude," cold and still in death, his stiffened fingers with their icy chill, still clasped the jeweled cross Catalina had worn.

Over the kindly face had settled a smile of such patient sweetness and trust, that all who saw him marveled at the Christ-like resemblance. Not far from the stone cross that marks the spot where Catalina sleeps, they found Padre Sanches a resting place among the friends he loved. As Don Ramon, he had turned the last page in his sad history. No baffling secrets would trouble him more, for his spirit, happy in the release from its earthly tenement, had joined the one whom he loved.

Aided no doubt by the revival of the mystery, and the belief that the spirit of Catalina still haunted the place, "Our Lady of Solitude" was one of the first missions to feel the touch of neglect. The once devoted band of Indians silently one by one dropped away from the region of so much mystery, shadow and woe, and left the ruthless elements to erase all but the heavy air of sadness which hangs like a pall over the spot, where occurred one of the most mysterious tragedies ever told of mission life in Alta California.

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The enigma of La Soledad was never solved. How the remains of the beautiful Catalina came to be buried near the walls of the chapel and in the garb of a nun will always remain the mystery it is. The discovery of the jeweled locket in her resting place, proved beyond doubt to the sorrowing parents and to Ramon that it was she who slept near the sanctified spot. They said that her presence, ever near her once happy home, often sought the places held sacred to her memory. They whispered also of her spirit voice mingling with the music of the mission bells which, borne on the breeze, wafted comforting messages to her loving friends. Rightly named "Our Lady of Solitude," for out of keeping with the sacredness of the spot would be activity and strife.

Where once the bells of La Soledad were heard calling the faithful to worship, is now a strange isolation unbroken, save by the songs of the birds, or the winds plaintively whispering to those whose spirits are in harmony with the pervading sadness of the place of a romance unequalled for sorrow and gloom. How easy, then, to bring up a vision of the past and clothe it again with the mystery of La Soledad!

THE CHAPEL RUINS

L. OF C.

SAN FRANCISCO

So short a time ago these hills

*The sand-storm blew and all was waste and drear.
So short a time ago, through pains and ills,
The good Francisco monks made resting here,
And to St. Francis raised a cross to tell
Who first unto these new shores came to dwell.*

To-day the city stretches far away,

*The hills of sand bloom like the cedar tree ;
The tapering masts of nations crowd the bay,
And she is crowned 'Queen of the sunset sea,'
While in her diadem such stars have gleamed
Of which the good St. Francis never dreamed.*

— Clarence Urmy.

THE CHAPEL RUINS

EARLY in the century, and long before the Mexican War, Mission San Jose was visited by one of the worst storms ever known in its history. The rain had continued without stopping for several days, and on the evening in question it increased in violence, and gave promise of raging with unabated fury far into the night. The wind twisted and tore the limbs of the trees, and howled and shrieked about the thick adobe walls of the houses till it seemed as if all the condemned had been let loose for a mad frolic in the inky blackness which shrouded the land. The roads were like rivers, and washouts were reported in many places, making it very unsafe traveling. The ground for days had refused to absorb more water, but still, as if in derision, the storm-king held sway, and reveled in a power over which there was no control. Such a storm had not been known for years, and the old Spanish residents shook their heads and crossed themselves as each gust of wind tore through the trees and rattled the casements in wild effort to seek an entrance.

In one of the oldest and largest adobe mansions in the neighborhood of the mission, the inmates were making ready for a great event, regardless of

the fearful storm without. Lights were to be seen through the closed blinds in all parts of the house, and servants were busily going from room to room, as if on very important errands, and so it proved, for the beautiful and stately Carmelita Carrillo, only child of Don Pablo Carrillo, was to be married in a few days to a wealthy and handsome young Spaniard, the last of the noble line of Ortegas. Fernando Ortega came from Spain on a short visit to California, and on an almost hopeless quest for some documents relating to large estates in his country, which had been in litigation since his grandfather's time, and long before Fernando was born. The papers were stolen and brought to this coast, as in late years he had reason to suppose, but all hope of recovering this great wealth for the rightful heir, without the documents, had for some time been abandoned. No one had sought in this country, and yet the old traditions were that the documents and an enemy of the Ortega house had disappeared about the same time.

With Fernando's desire to visit the new world, was a hope that he might find living some of the descendants of the man who, in a spirit of revenge, had deprived his ancestors of such valuable property. But on Fernando's arrival in Monterey, he met at the home of the governor, the beautiful Carmelita Carrillo, and all interest in the precious documents were forgotten in his absorbing love for her; but not so with Carmelita, who had heard the

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story of the missing papers. The idea of a mystery pleased her, and when she laughingly told him he would find them yet in some unexpected place, his answer was that he wanted nothing more precious than herself to take back with him. The time had long past which was intended for his return to Spain, but having lost his heart, he also lost all desire to return without the queenly Carmelita as his wife.

The Don, her father, was reluctant to part with his dear and only child, to have her go so far away from him ; he was growing old, and was not his wife buried in the mission cemetery, where he hoped to rest some day ? No, he could not possibly follow his daughter to Spain, and make a new home in his old age, and he could not give her up, so the wedding was deferred from time to time till almost a year had gone, and the young man grew impatient to take his bride and return to his own country, where he knew her beauty and stately manner would win for her, not only the admiration of the court, but also of all the grandees, in whose society his great wealth and standing would take her. The charming Carmelita was not averse to the glittering life she was so fitted to adorn, but she dearly loved her father, and could not be reconciled to leaving him lonely at his time of life ; so it was agreed that the young couple should spend one year of their honeymoon in Spain, and then return and live with Don Pablo his few

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remaining years. So now great preparations for the wedding were in progress despite the violence of the elements.

Friends and relatives were expected from Monterey and Los Angeles, and some were even now on their way in storm-tossed sailing vessels. Anxiety about their safe arrival, and the prospect of such unpleasant weather for her bridal, kept Carmelita from sleeping for several hours after she retired. She well knew if the weather continued violent it would prevent many of her people from coming who lived in the surrounding country and depended on horse and carrita, for the roads were in too serious condition to be traveled while the tempest lasted. The Carrillo house, as her home was called, did not always belong to her father. When the old Don bought the property, the house and grounds had been neglected for years. In fact the place had the reputation of being haunted, so it was not considered desirable. Don Pablo Carrillo, however, had no such superstitious notions, and Carmelita was delighted at the thought of living in a haunted house, so both were pleased with the purchase of the property from the heirs of the former owner, Don Jose Valencia.

The secrecy surrounding the last days of Don Jose had given the place its ill-omened name. He had lived there alone with an old servant for many years, and instead of dying like a good Christian should, in his bed, he had simply disappeared and

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the mystery of his sudden departure was a mystery still. As years went by the place was shunned, neglected and feared as the abode of evil spirits, who had made away with the old man. The house was old and rambling, for several additions had been built to it from time to time by Don Jose, the gentleman who had made his exit from the world in such a novel manner. While in possession of Don Pablo Carrillo several more large rooms had been added and the older parts rebuilt, with the exception of the chapel, which was in such a ruinous state and so overgrown with ivy as to belong past use. For the sake, however, of the ghostly associations which had enhanced the value of the residence in her eyes, Carmelita claimed that part of the building, and said it must not be disturbed. The house was surrounded by cultivated lands, and since Don Pablo had thinned the dense shrubbery, and let the daylight through, their superstitious neighbors felt that the evil spirits had been exorcised from their abode.

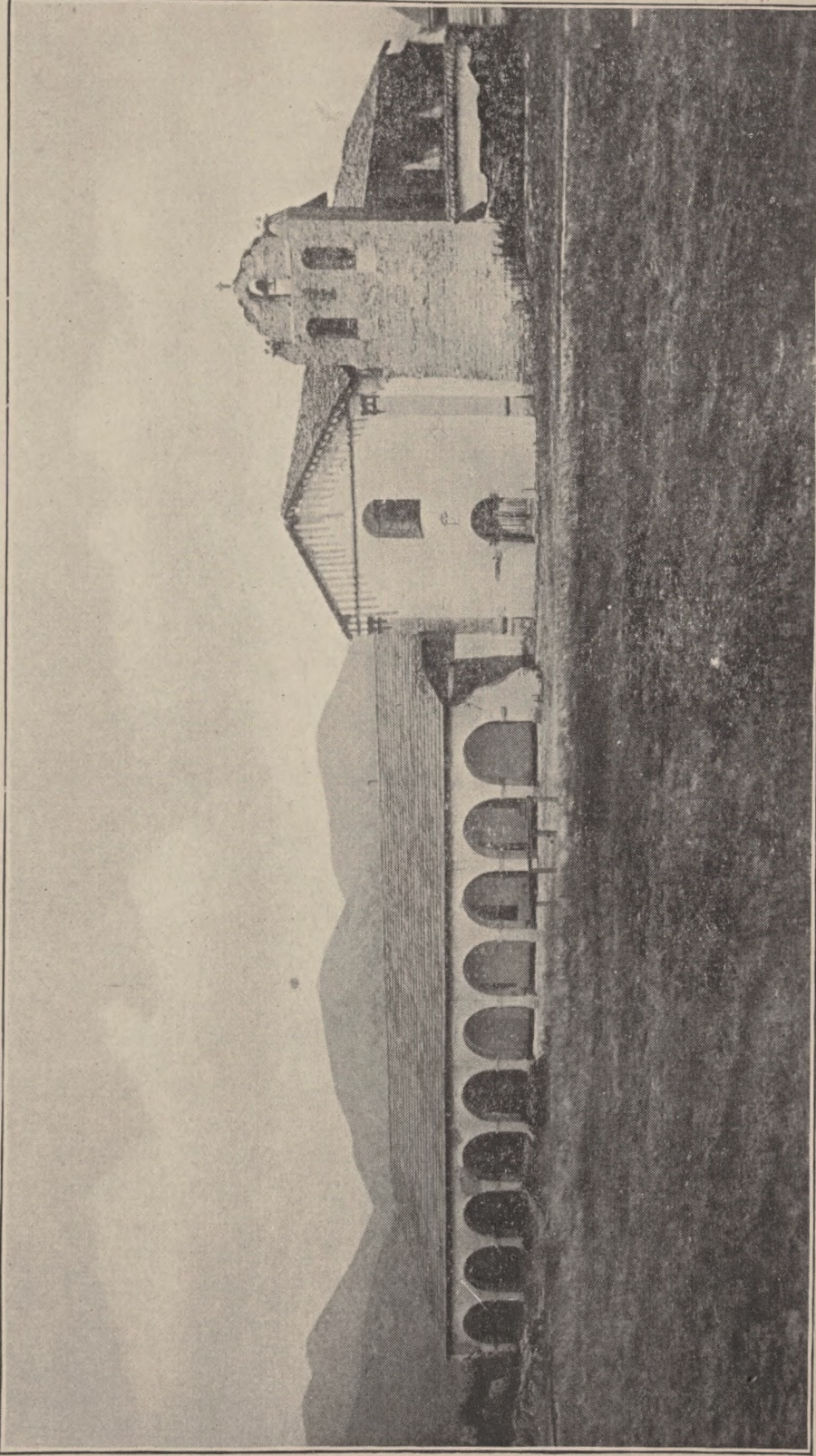
From the windows of Carmelita's apartments she could see the old chapel, and to her it was the most picturesque spot in the grounds. "I never tire of it," she was often heard to say. Her favorite seat was near a stone cross, moss-grown, and covered with vines, and from it she could see the thick walls and broken altar, now crumbled out of shape. It was here she loved to sit, and recall, in imagination, the time when the chapel was used for

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holy work ; and she wondered how many brides and penitents had crossed the threshold in its years of service.

She had a feeling, she said, that the chapel she loved so well would bring her good luck, and she fervently wished she could be married among its ruins. Fernando said he was willing to be married there even if he did have to stand half bent under the broken walls, if only she would not delay the wedding longer. And it is likely her romantic desire would have been gratified if the tempest had not prevented. Such a storm ! She could not recall one like it in all her seventeen years of life. Thinking how unfortunate it was to have happened at this time of all others, Carmelita fell asleep at last, and dreamed that old Don Jose Valencia had appeared to her, holding the missing papers of the Ortega property in his hand. By morning, all traces of stormy weather had disappeared, and the sun shone bright and warm as if in gladness to be out again. It shone in Carmelita's face, and awakened her just as Don Jose and the documents faded from her sight as she attempted to reach for them.

Springing up, glad to see the sun once more, and hailing it as a good omen, she dressed and went to the window to see her chapel—the first thing she did every morning—but with one startled look she rushed down and out of the house, through the wet and soaked shrubbery and grass, to where her beloved and picturesque ruins were.



MISSION SANTA YNEZ

Founded September 17, 1804

THE CHAPEL RUINS

There she found her chapel a complete wreck, all the beautiful vines had been torn away by the wind, and all but the thick wall which was built against the older part of the house had broken into a shapeless mass. Further, to her astonishment, in this thick wall she discovered an opening, which revealed stone steps that led down to a vault beneath the floor where the altar once stood.

Here was a discovery, indeed. What might she not find? Perhaps the documents—the dream was still in her mind, and strangely impressed her. Wildly excited she ran back to the house, where she found Fernando, whom she had not seen for two days, and who had braved the dangers of the roads in the early morning to visit her. Without stopping for breath she excitedly told the story of her discovery of the chapel's vault, and of her singular dream, and urged her father and Fernando to open the place without delay.

“I am sure,” she exclaimed, “you will find something worth all your trouble, I cannot rest till I know what it contains.”

So, yielding to her persistent and enthusiastic mood, her father ordered the vault to be opened, and there, to the amazement of them all, was found the fleshless skeleton of a man, and near by, upon a little table was a small iron-bound box, with the key still in the rusty lock. Death had evidently overtaken this man while examining the contents of the chest. What more likely than to suppose

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that the mystery of Don Jose Valencia's disappearance had been cleared up at last ?

The chapel had given up a secret, but whose ? It remained for the box to tell. Eagerly it was opened, and proof established by papers therein, that it had belonged to Don Jose Valencia, who was never a Valencia at all, but Don Jose Vasquez, the enemy of the Ortega house, who had assumed the name of Valencia to cover up his guilt. And their astonishment grew as further search revealed the missing Ortega documents which would give to Fernando the valuable estates of his ancestors. Don Jose little thought in choosing this hiding place for the stolen papers, he was also preparing his tomb, or that the documents would, some day, be discovered to the rightful heirs.

Through the power of a dream, and the havoc of a storm, Carmelita, the heroine of the occasion, was happy in being the instrument through which so much mystery had been revealed, and she mischievously told Fernando that she had been keeping his treasure for him, till, like a fairy prince, he should come to claim her. So, after all, the old chapel brought her good fortune and at the wedding a few days later, to which all the guests had safely arrived, the story of the romantic finding of the documents had to be told and retold, and proved of as much interest as the wedding itself.

The year spent in Spain by Fernando and Carmelita was most delightful. Carmelita was admired

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to Fernando's satisfaction, and she thoroughly enjoyed the gay life of the older world. The documents which Fernando produced, forever settled all dispute about the estates, and when he was placed in possession of them, he and Carmelita spent some weeks visiting in the old castles now become their property.

On their return to their California home, Carmelita had the chapel ruins removed and over the place was set the stone cross, about which she planted vines to mark the spot which had been of such interest to her. After her father's death, which occurred some years later, Carmelita and her husband sailed again for Spain, there to make their final home.

The adobe mansion, about which clustered the facts for this romantic story, has long since crumbled beneath the storms of many winters. Sadly but surely the changes come to these land marks, and, like the race who built them, they perish. It seems almost certain that in a few years not one adobe ranch house will be left to stand as a monument to the memory of the people who made the early history of California.

SISTER DOLORES

PADRE SERRA

*While Padre Serra's part long since was played,
His sepulcher is yet uncarved and rough ;
Therein by friends in simple sorrow laid,
Though honored some he's honored not enough.
In ruined state his Missions stand to-day,
A sad reproach to Time's progressive hand ;
A mournful commentary on the way,
The great are left forgotten by their land :
And in my thoughts of him this came to me
When thinking of the grave wherein he lies ;
As none earned sculptured marble more than he,
Here is a noble soul to canonize.*

*One now can say, though he to fame was born,
Here lies a man, great honors left forlorn.*

—" Father Junipero Serra," Epilogue.

SISTER DOLORES

SUCH a glorious sunset as the evening promised could not be found anywhere else in the world. Thus early, Nature, reveling in her artistic display, had touched here and there the fleecy white clouds with most brilliant colors; and the streaming rays of the sun, as they dipped toward old ocean, did not lose themselves in the mighty waters, but shone again in a path of gold on the sparkling waves.

The huge breakers, as they rolled in and dashed with a booming sound on the rocks, bore on their feathery crest a golden crown, reflecting all the delicate tints of the sea-shell in the misty spray thrown by the force of the waves high in the air, then, receding and repeating, over and over again, just as they had done for ages, always in motion, always moaning, and always enchantingly new to the lovers of the beautiful Monterey Bay.

No part of the Pacific coast could surpass it in picturesqueness of scenery or the glory of its sunsets. So thought Leonita Moreno, as she looked longingly from the window toward the rocks on the shore, where she had promised to meet Felipe, and wander with him up and down the white sands while the day was declining. The

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look of impatience deepened on her face as she heard a slight movement in the next room.

"Will she never go to sleep and leave me free to go?" murmured the girl, as she softly moved near the door and glanced in the direction of the bed.

What she saw was an old woman, with a crown of snow-white hair, and though the aged face seemed drawn with pain, the expression was almost saintly, and, as her lips moved in prayer, she repeatedly pressed to them the small crucifix which she held in her hand.

The slight noise made by Leonita disturbed the sick woman, who feebly asked for water. After drinking, she sank back, almost exhausted for a moment, then, recovering, she took the young girl's hand in hers, fondly and lovingly smoothing it as she said :

"Leonita, my darling, this is a hard life for one so bright and beautiful as you ; to be tied to a sick old woman not of your blood ; but God will reward you, and the Holy Mother will bless you for your goodness to me. It pains me to see you look so sad. I have not heard your sweet songs, the tinkle of your guitar, or your bright and happy laugh, for days. It would do the old woman good to see the smiles chase the shadows away. You have been the comfort of my life, Lita, darling, since you were placed in my care, after your mother died. Too young to miss the loving mother, you soon

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won your way to my heart by your cunning little acts. Since then you have been to me as my own child."

"Not always, dear mother. Even now I have been impatient and cross because I could not go to meet Felipe, and I am an ungrateful girl for all your loving kindness ; but I will confess my faults to good Father Gaspar, and he will forgive me if I promise to do so no more."

"Felipe ! — Felipe ! — do you love him, my child ?"

"Oh ! my mother, more than I can tell do I love him, and more, I fear, than he loves me, for he vows devotion to me and flirts with Inez, till my heart is almost broken. Is there nothing but sorrow and trouble in this world, dear mother ?"

"All hearts have their trials, my child ; but you are much too young to have a shadow fall on your life. I would that you had never met Felipe and that he had not won your love — but go, my child, and meet him now, and I will rest awhile and pray that your life may be a happy one ; but know, my Leonita, that things we wish most for do not always prove our greatest blessings."

Leonita tenderly kissed the kind old woman and went sadly away, thinking how little she deserved the love of her adopted mother, and reproaching herself for her ill-natured impatience. Thoughtfully she walked along the well-worn path to the beach, over which a short time ago she would se

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eagerly have flown. As she approached the rock, where she was to meet Felipe, she heard voices. Could it be Felipe was waiting for her, when it was long past the time she should have been there? And to whom was he talking? What if it were Inez? Could her jealous heart endure to see them together? Could she bear the mocking light in her rival's eyes which ever shone triumphant when she had been made unhappy? Stopping for a moment to wonder who were there, she quite plainly heard Felipe say:

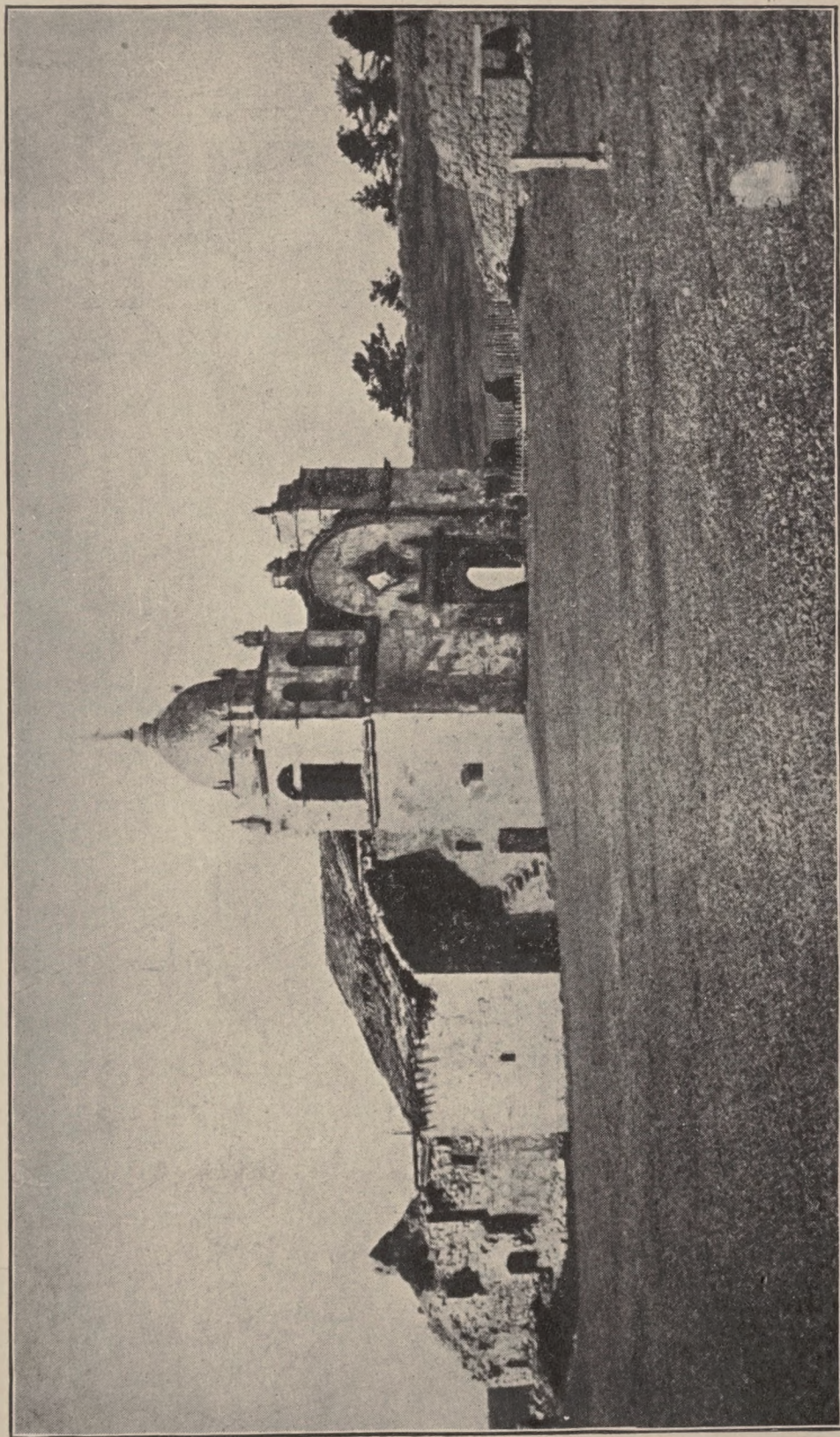
"You know I love you, Inez, and when I am with you I forget all others. But you are cruel to me and play with my heart as you do with Jose's.

"Why should I love you, Felipe, when you are Lita's affianced husband?" replied Inez.

"But I am not and never will be, if you will love me," answered Felipe.

Poor Leonita! She stood for a moment, incapable of moving, then turned and made her way toward the old Carmelo church, and when she reached its friendly shadow, she sank upon the ground more dead than alive.

For hours the poor child lay moaning and calling on the Virgin Mother for comfort. She did not heed the vesper bells of San Carlos, as, tunefully sweet, the sacred music of their chimes was wafted far over the valley. The beautiful sunset, the peaceful scene, had no power to interest her now. She did not heed that darkness had come, that



MISSION SAN CARLOS BORROMEO

Founded June 3, 1770

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night was far advanced, or that a fog was rolling in from the sea, which enveloped her as in a winding sheet. Her mental sufferings were too great for her to realize where she was, or what she was doing, till the chill night air aroused her; then she arose and groped her way through the thick fog to her home, which she entered like one dazed.

Here the darkness and the stillness startled her and brought her mind back to the dear old woman left so long alone. Lighting a lamp she hastily entered her mother's room, only to find the last spark of life had fled from the one being who truly loved her.

The next morning Leonita was found, moaning in delirium, by the side of her dead friend. Kind sisters took care of her, but it was many days before she was able to know them; then she turned her face to the wall and prayed to die. Kindly and patiently, the good sisters ministered to her with sweet sympathy and prayer, until she was once more restored to health, but not to happiness. Her poor white face, from which all light had fled, seemed more the face of a heart-broken woman than that of a young girl.

Long before Leonita was able to mingle again with those of her own age, Felipe and Inez were married. She heard the wedding bells ring without a thought that it held any interest for her. No feeling of love had been in her heart for Felipe since that terrible night when she found her mother

dead. Her companions wondered at her devotion to the memory of the old woman, as they saw her sitting, white and silent, by the grave. None but the sisters knew it was remorse for her seeming neglect of her mother on the night she died; and Leonita could not be made to feel but that for her selfish love for Felipe her mother would have been living. "My neglect killed her," was ever her cry.

Years passed on; many changes came to the place, and into the lives of the people — but none so great as the change to the once sad-looking Leonita. Visitors to Monterey often met and heard of the beautiful, sweet-faced sister, who went about helping all those who were in sickness and trouble. No task was too great for her to accomplish, and there was no death-bed at which she did not appear, like an Angel of Mercy — for Sister Dolores, as Leonita was called, had found in her ministration to others the true happiness of life.

THE WEDDING RING

THE PACIFIC FROM CYPRESS POINT

*The sun while sinking in the distant west,
Was by the cumulus and stratus veiled ;
And in those vapor barriers prevailed
The wondrous tints, eve's hour makes manifest.
Outspreading like gigantic airy fans,
The streaming rays through fleecy rifts to me
Appeared, above the still Pacific sea ;
Reflecting golden shadows on the sands.
The scene, my mind so gently did enchain,
That I sang out our Padre's evening psalm ;
The Father joined me in the sweet refrain,
And o'er my soul there came a rest so calm ;
For in that song my feelings found release,
And life for once seemed one of perfect peace.*

— "Father Junipero Serra," Act II, Scene I.

THE WEDDING RING

DON Alfonso Gonzales, with his wife and daughter, had been hastily summoned to the death-bed of old Don Rafael. The messenger said the old man was sinking fast, and urged them to lose no time in preparations if they would see the Don alive.

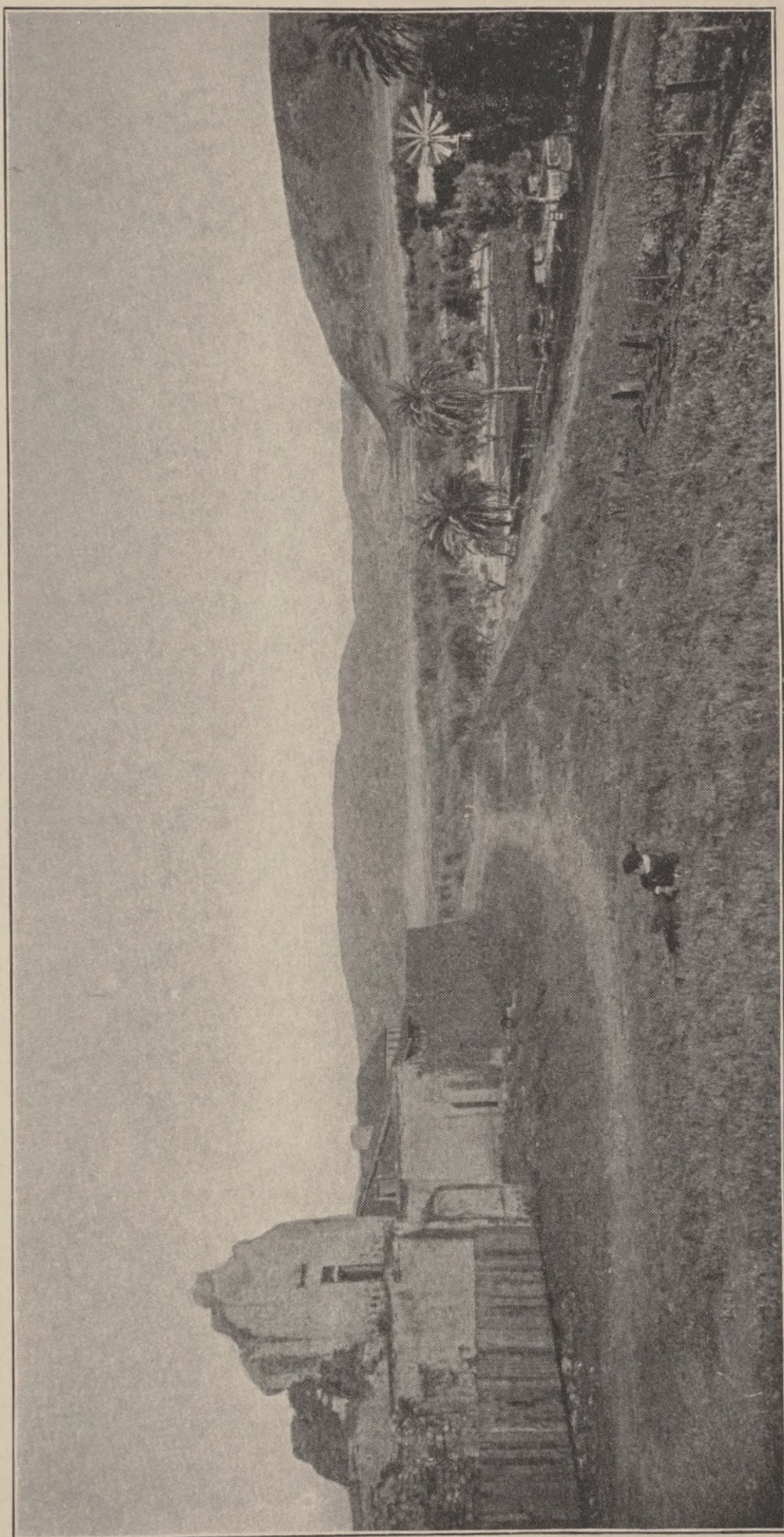
The rain had poured in torrents all day and the roads were almost impassable. To add to the unpleasantness of a ten-mile drive over such a dangerous highway was the fact that night was closing in, dark and cold. A penetrating wind found its way through the thickest garment, denying to the wearer the comfort of its protection from the dampness and chillness of a long and terrible night's ride.

If they arrived safely, it was more than the Señora Gonzales expected. There were many dangers in taking this drive even by daylight after such a storm. But at night, and in the darkness, it was terrifying! She was sure they would be overturned and thrown down some dreadful abyss and killed. "Why, of all the nights in the calendar, should Don Rafael choose this one to pass from life," she mentally asked. "And why had he sent for her?" She had met him but a few times, and

then was not favorably impressed with the old man, who for years had lived almost the life of a recluse. "What could he want of her daughter, Christina, whom he had never seen?" Such questions puzzled the Señora greatly. Don Alfonso did not stop to consider the condition of the roads, the alarming weather or the state of his wife's mind. The old man wanted them to come to him on this last evening of his life, and he said he would go much farther and on a worse night for Don Rafael had he been asked to do so. To the Señora Gonzales, Don Alfonso's word was law and she knew, while making a protest against leaving the comforts of her fireside, that the journey must be made.

To Christina, her daughter, the night's ride was not without interest. The strangeness of the visit excited her curiosity, and nothing quite so much to her fancy had ever occurred before. She greatly loved change and excitement, and little enough of that had she been allowed in her school life. She had come from the convent a few days before for a short vacation, and was to return on the morrow. Now the novelty of a night's ride to Don Rafael's rancho had happily intervened to prolong the time of her return.

Don Rafael's house was situated near the coast, some distance north from San Diego, and in a wildly picturesque spot. He owned the land for many miles about that charming location, and it



MISSION SAN DIEGO DE ALCALÁ

Founded July 16, 1769

THE WEDDING RING

was seldom, in the quiet life he led, that he cared to visit other ranchos. His books, his horses, his dogs, and a few faithful servants were all the companions he wished to have. Some people said old Don Rafael was in league with evil ones, and that was the reason he did not wish his son to live with him. Strange sights and sounds, they declared, had been seen and heard about the old man's place at night, which could not be accounted for by the believers in supernatural agencies. To all this idle talk, however, Don Alfonso gave no heed. He knew how strangely sad Don Rafael's life had been since the death of his wife, to whom he was passionately devoted. Manuel, his child, who resembled his mother in looks and disposition, would have been to his father a constant reminder of his great loss. This fact and the parent's sad and broken life, which, he felt, would affect the happiness of the boy, were the chief reasons, Don Alfonso was convinced, why Don Rafael persistently refused to see his son. After Don Rafael's affliction he had discouraged all visitors to his house excepting Don Alfonso; with him he kept up a peculiar friendship, never returning any of Don Alfonso's visits, but always insisting that Don Alfonso should at intervals repeat his.

This son and only child Don Rafael had not seen since the lad was twelve years old. After the death of the boy's mother Don Rafael had taken his son to Mexico and placed him in school, giving

his wife's brother entire charge of him until he should wish him to return. Fourteen years had passed since then, and in all that time Don Rafael had expressed no wish to see Manuel. He kept the young man well supplied with money, and took an interest in all his studies and pursuits by writing him regularly and often. When Manuel suggested a visit to his father Don Rafael replied, saying that he chose to live alone and did not care for the society of a young man or the company he would bring to his house. After this letter, saying his presence was not desired, Manuel never again asked to visit his father. But now, on this night, when Don Alfonso and his family, in haste to reach Don Rafael's death-bed, were braving untold dangers to do so, Manuel was hastening from another direction to the same place. The over-due vessel in which he came, should have reached port two days before had not the storm prevented. On his arrival in San Diego, however, he found a trusty servant with horses awaiting him with the message that his father was dying and that he must ride with all speed if he would see him before he breathed his last.

The Señora Gonzales never forgot the terrors of that night's ride. The darkness was intense. It was only by the servant and Don Alfonso taking turns and walking before the carrita with a light that they could make any headway at all. The Mexican showed no love for this adventure. He

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had his own opinions of Don Rafael and would much prefer going from, than towards his house, but Don Alfonso's spirit of determination to push ahead despite all obstacles gave the rest of the party no chance to do otherwise than make the best of what they could not prevent. Even Christina was willing to turn back when she found how hard it was for her mother to endure such a journey. Shivering with cold and fear the Señora Gonzales clung closely to her daughter, expecting every moment to meet some horrible form of death. Thus, alternately imploring the protection of the saints and trying to comfort her mother, Christina passed her time till they reached the long and wooded entrance to Don Rafael's home. At last her mother began to feel more composed, in the hope of a safe termination to their journey, which fact gave Christina an opportunity to look about her.

It was indeed a weird place to visit after the hour of midnight. A dense forest of trees and a tangle of undergrowth was all she could see by the aid of their light. Dripping branches stretched their great arms over the road, as they suddenly entered the wide arroyo, almost sweeping them from the path. Owls hooted at them from a distance and the multitude of bats which gathered about the light followed after like a band of ill-omened spirits. Frightful noises, unlike anything they had ever heard, greeted them as they penetrated the thick

blackness of the place made intense by the heavy growth of chaparral. The wind whistled, then sobbed and moaned, to their imagination, like souls in torment. These awful sounds, coming closer and closer till it seemed to them that they were entirely surrounded with demons, then, with a startled shriek, the noise would die away to a low moan of distress, or, what to them was worse, a mirthless and fiendish laugh. The effect produced by this combination of reports and echoes and the surrounding darkness of the place was paralyzing. The terror of Señora Gonzales and the old servant increased till they both prostrated themselves and cried aloud to the saints and to the Holy Mother for protection.

Christina, with chattering teeth, could not speak from fright, and even Don Alfonso's great courage appeared to desert him for a moment. At last they saw the welcome light from the old Don's house through the trees and knew they were almost at the end of their fearful ride. The Señora Gonzales felt that the nearness to the Don's residence was little comfort; she was sure more dreadful things were yet to happen before the long night was over. Christina, with much of her father's spirit, bravely encouraged her mother to feel that all trouble was now past. Consequently, the Señora's dismay largely left her as she was lifted out of the carreta at the door of Don Rafael's house.

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A good fire, refreshments, and the feeling that they were all safe for the present wonderfully cheered the Señora's spirits, but she mentally registered a vow that she would never allow her husband to dictate to her again what she must or must not do. No, not if it were a summons from the king, should Don Alfonso make her repeat that ride. All unconscious that the reign of his authority over the Señora was at an end, Don Alfonso hastily drank a cup of coffee, then asked to be taken to Don Rafael's room, while the Señora and her daughter reposed on the couches before the fire, enjoying a much needed siesta.

The clock was striking two and the wind, which had calmed down, was beginning to shriek and howl dismally again as Don Alfonso re-entered the room and aroused his wife to prepare her for that which was to follow. The poor Señora, still living over the last few hours in her dreams, started up in alarm. Utterly forgetting her vow to be firm with her husband, she frantically implored him not to ask her to go through further trying ordeals. Don Alfonso calmed her excitement and then informed her that Padre Anselmo of San Louis Rey Mission was in the sick room, and Manuel, the old Don's son, who arrived a short time before them, had since been sitting by his fathers's bed.

"On my entrance," said Don Alfonso, "Don Rafael informed me he had sent for us for the purpose of asking our daughter's hand in marriage for

his son, Manuel, and as he had but a few hours to live, he wished the ceremony to take place at once if agreeable to our wishes. He also said his son would inherit his vast wealth, and was in every way worthy to be the husband of our daughter. When I mentioned Christina's extreme youth and that possibly Manuel might object to marrying a girl he had never seen, Don Rafael replied, saying that Manuel understood and would do as he wished, and that Christina was fifteen, an age at which many girls were married.

"She is such a child," said the Señora, tearfully protesting against such a grewsome wedding for her daughter. "I cannot consent to it. No good will come of this night's work, Alfonso, and I wish we had never come to this dreadful place." But to all the Señora's objections Don Alfonso would remind her of the old Don's great wealth, and the advantage it would be to their daughter and that he had other children to provide for besides Christina.

Reluctantly the Señora Gonzales consented when she found she could not do otherwise, then, at a hasty summons to the sick room, saying there was no time to lose, she awakened her sleeping child, to prepare her for a marriage which she felt boded no good to any of them.

Christina, frightened, bewildered and half awake, could not understand at first why they disturbed her slumber, but when she realized what they were saying, and her father had told her the marriage

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was for the best, she answered not a word, but silently followed her parents to Don Rafael's room, trembling with fright at the strange proceedings.

Without glancing at each other Manuel and Christina took their places by the old man's bed as they were bidden, and the ceremony began. When it came to the ring, Don Rafael, with shaking fingers handed to Manuel his mother's wedding ring, which he took from a box of sparkling jewels by his side. During the long ceremony Manuel stood motionless. If he made any responses they were not heard above the noise of the wind without, and the hand which held that of his bride was cold as the touch of ice to the shrinking girl. Christina, hardly able to stand from fear, ventured timidly one glance in Manuel's face, but quickly shrank in terror from him as she saw the look of horror and despair it wore.

A lull in the storm for a moment made the stillness in the room profound, as good Father Anselmo finished the ceremony and gave the husband and wife his blessing. Don Rafael then feebly stretched forth his hand over the bowed heads in benediction, and immediately after sank back on his pillow, dead.

Just then the wind, as if waiting for a fitting climax to this most unholy wedding, came with a fearful blast,—wailing, shrieking, moaning, it tore at the casements as if eager to enter and possess itself of the old man's soul. The branches of the

trees, bending in the storm and wildly lashing the house, made unearthly and direful sounds as the wind in its fury shook them too and fro.

"It is a warning that the wicked spirit of the dead man is going to some horrible torture," thought Señora Gonzales. This omen of misfortune was fraught with such a terrible meaning to her that she shuddered with fright and nervousness. The effect on Christina of the sudden death was also such as to make her lose all control over herself, and like her mother she shrieked and sobbed with the wind as Don Alfonso hurried them from the room, and bade them retire to rest.

He then returned to close the eyes of his dead friend and summon the servants to perform the sad and last work for their old master. On re-entering the room he found Padre Anselmo vainly endeavoring to comfort and console Manuel, who seemed for the time almost frenzied with grief. Shaking with sobs he had thrown himself down by his father's bed, wildly imploring his father's forgiveness and begging for his blessing. With patient kindness and unremitting attention the priest at last soothed and helped him to overcome in a measure his frantic grief, then induced him to seek repose. Sleep did not come to Manuel, however, as the watchers below knew, for they heard his footsteps till the break of day, as he walked back and forth in the room above the one where Don Rafael died.

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At a late breakfast, to which Father Anselmo and Don Alfonso alone were present, Manuel soon made his appearance. The young man's face, white and drawn, looked as if years of suffering had made it so. He did not ask after his bride and her mother, and took no notice of his guests other than to say that he wished to see them alone for a short time after the meal was over. In silence he drank his coffee, then passed, with Father Anselmo and Don Alfonso, into the next room.

Hesitating for a moment and speaking with difficulty, he asked if any of the servants knew of the marriage which had taken place the night before. When told they did not, he requested that no one be informed of it till after the funeral, which would take place the next day. When that was over he had a confession to make to them both. "The funeral services," he said, "will be from the chapel on the place, and the remains will afterwards be placed in the family vault near by." Manuel then asked as a favor that Don Alfonso would make all necessary arrangements for his father's interment. Upon getting Don Alfonso's consent that all should be as he wished, Manuel left the room and was not seen by any of the family again that day.

Señora Gonzales awoke unrefreshed, her sleeping moments had been visited by hideous dreams in which she had lived over and over again all the terrors of the past night. Awake, she seemed to

feel the phantom spirit of Don Rafael hovering over her with evil intent. She could not throw off the impression that more misfortune was to follow, and said if it were not for Father Anselmo's presence nothing should keep her in the house another day. Don Alfonso, more disturbed than he cared to own, by Manuel's request, had enjoined his wife and daughter to make no mention of the midnight marriage to any one without his permission. This, to the Señora Gonzales, was still another proof that nothing but harm could come to them while in the old Don's home.

Too indisposed to leave her room, the Señora, attended by her daughter, spent the greater part of her time invoking the protection of the saints to save them from further suffering. The strangeness of the position of the little bride, wedded to a man she did not know and who had taken no interest in her, was enough to keep her by her mother's side. Manuel's avoidance of them all was a comfort to her. She dreaded to meet him and prayed that her parents would not leave her with her husband when they left for their home. She had seen Manuel from her window that morning and her fear of him was not so great when she saw what a handsome and manly looking gentleman he was, but the recollection of that look of hopeless sorrow which shadowed his face and shone with such horror from his dark eyes proved to her that he had not been a willing party to his marriage.

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A few old acquaintances and some curious neighbors attended the old Don's funeral, but Manuel and Don Alfonso were the only mourners. The Señora, still indisposed from fatigue and hysteria, could not be induced to enter the chapel while the old man was above ground, and Christina willingly remained with her mother.

When Don Rafael had been laid to rest by the side of his wife, Manuel sought Father Anselmo and Don Alfonso in the room where his father died. Seating himself near the Father and hoping thereby to gain help and courage through him for the confession he was about to make, Manuel began: "Don Alfonso, I ask that you will be patient and hear to the end my confession and also the story I have to relate before you interrupt or pass judgment upon me. I have done a great wrong and any atonement I can make to the last farthing of my property would I willingly give if money could wipe out this insult to you and yours in the crime I have committed. I confess to you in grief and shame, Don Alfonso, that when I took your daughter's hand in mine to make her my wife, the night my father died, I was already a married man. The day before I left Mexico to join my father, to whom I was hurriedly summoned, I wedded the daughter of my mother's life-long friend, trusting I could soften my father's prejudice against her, while in attendance on him. I then little dreamed he was so near death. I had

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hoped I should have many days with him before he passed away. On my arrival I was soon convinced he had only a few hours to live. I could not then mention what I knew would excite and irritate him, but when, to my horror, I found he had arranged a marriage for me to take place by his death-bed you can imagine my feelings. You were momentarily expected and, God forgive me, I hoped he would die before you came. When I protested to my father against such a marriage, he said if I valued his blessing more than his curse, I would do as he wished. I saw his growing excitement and Father Anselmo, who did not understand my reluctance to the marriage, said the agitation and my refusal would be fatal. He, therefore, begged me to comply with the request. The consequence of my refusal I saw only too well. The dread of his curses and the knowledge that I should hasten his death, prevented my speaking further; just then you came into the room and my father acquainted you with his desires.

“Remember,” continued Manuel, “I had no time to speak with Father Anselmo alone, for my father insisted that I should remain constantly by his side. Had I known of his intentions to have us married at his bedside, I would have remained away until after his death, but I was kept in ignorance till the last moment and no choice given me but to go through the ceremony or take my father’s curses and be the means of his untimely death.

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Too bewildered to think or act intelligently in my frenzied state of mind, I could only pray that time would make it plain what was best to be done when all was over. Don Alfonso," said Manuel, with an effort, "let me now explain to you why I so hastily married on the eve of my departure from Mexico.

"On my twenty-first birthday my uncle placed in my hand a letter addressed to me, written by my mother a few weeks before she died. In this letter she informed me of the existence of a feud between my father and Don Horacio Gaspar, caused by trouble over some property in which my father won the suit. My mother said she always felt that Don Horacio had been wronged out of his land, but he had no proof other than his word that he had years before paid a large sum of money for it. The papers, relating to the transaction, were accidentally destroyed before being recorded, and the scoundrel from whom he bought the land, learning of their loss, denied the sale to Don Horacio. While they were still disputing my father, knowing nothing of it, bought the property and took possession. He who would not willingly have wronged Don Horacio out of the land always believed that Don Horacio brought the suit to worry and annoy him for some fancied slight. This trouble my father, in his morbid condition, brooded over constantly and my mother was forbidden to visit at Don Horacio's house or receive the visits of her

dear friend, Don Horacio's wife. This so grieved my mother, who had never been separated from her friend for a single day of her life, that she became ill and my father determined to leave Mexico and settle in California rather than allow the visits of these friends to continue. It was a hard and cruel blow for my mother to be taken from all the associations that made her life so complete and be compelled to live in a new and rough country almost without companionship. She devotedly loved my father but she ever felt he had wronged her as well as her friends by his most unjust suspicions. When my father left Mexico he bought this land and built this fine old house. I was five years old at that time, and Carlota Gaspar, the daughter of my mother's dear companion, was not quite two years of age. A short time before the misfortune which separated my mother and Señora Gaspar they had laughingly betrothed us and gave to each other a promise to do all they could to further our love and marriage when we had reached a proper age.

"It occurred to my mother when she was dying that this marriage would bring back into the family of Don Horacio the property he had lost, and thus in a measure repay them for all they had suffered through my father's unjust suspicions. Thinking thus, she wrote the letter, mentioning the youthful betrothal and asking that when I knew her wishes I would seek to know and love Carlota Gaspar,

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whom, she was sure, would be as lovely as her mother, providing my affections were not otherwise engaged. If they were, she said she left me her blessing, and prayed that by some act of kindness I might undo the wrong from which her friends had suffered. She said she had asked my father to send me back to her old home in Mexico after she was dead, and she trusted he would do so.

“I well remember my mother and the many talks we had in regard to my future, but I cannot recollect that she ever mentioned her friend’s name or the name of her daughter, Carlota. She was too loyal to influence my young mind against my father by expressing to me then her desire; but afterwards, when I was of age and had the right to choose for myself, her wishes were revealed to me in the letter left in my uncle’s care. Fate willed I should not see or know Carlota Gaspar till I was twenty-one, and had read my mother’s letter. Don Horacio and his family had been some years in Spain before my mother died. This knowledge I now think my father had gained and it influenced him to favor my mother’s request that I should be educated in Mexico.

“When Carlota Gaspar and I met, after so many years, it was as strangers, but I soon learned to know and love her, for she was as charming in mind as she was beautiful in person. I was deeply in love with her, but I was not so sure of her affections. She had many suitors, and I from time

to time put off knowing my fate for fear of her rejection of me. Finally, rendered desperate by the attentions of others to her, I risked all and learned her love was all my own. In my gladness I wrote to my father and asked his consent to our marriage. Carlota's father was dead, and I felt with his death must have died my father's hatred for him. I did not dream it could extend to the wife or child, after so many years had passed. We had often spoken of the trouble, and Carlota and her mother advised me to write to him before making the engagement public. But when my father's answer came, it was like a blow. He forbade me to marry the daughter of his worst enemy if I wished to inherit his great wealth and receive his blessing. Knowing his hard and unbending will and how little hope it gave that he would relent, I was in despair, but Señora Gaspar soothed me by saying we were young and could wait a few years longer. She said my father, grown morose by living so much alone, had nursed and inflamed his hatred till he was completely absorbed in the venom of it. He was growing very old and the knowledge that he had not many years to live might soften his feelings towards us if we waited. She did not care for his money, she added, but she would not wish our young lives darkened by the inheritance of his curse. So we deferred our marriage from year to year, hoping almost against hope that he would relent, but happy in our great

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love for each other which no shadow of his curse could kill. In each letter I wrote my father I implored his consent to our union, and in each answer to mine he made no mention of the one subject I wished him to write about. I began to grow disheartened when his letter came, urging me to return without delay; he said he had not long to live and wanted to see me settled in life by marrying the daughter of an old friend and neighbor of his, before he passed away. It was out of the question for me to love another even to please my father, and knowing he would insist on my obeying him, I placed it out of his power to do so by my marriage to Carlota.

“I intended, as I said before, to tell him at the first opportunity after my arrival, hoping by my devotion to him to soften his heart, but, as you know, I found him at death’s door and was allowed no chance to speak for fear of breaking his last thread of life. Had he lived a few months, as I expected, I should have braved his curses, for I know my kindness and attention to him and the sight of my mother’s tear-stained letter to me would have softened a heart of stone. But the curses of dying lips I was not brave enough to invoke. I deceived him into giving me his blessing at the last, but the consciousness of it is no solace to me now. The crime I have committed will forever destroy my happiness. I almost lost my life before reaching here on that dark and stormy

night, and you, Don Alfonso, braved dangers that on another occasion would have proved the death of your party. Why fate should conspire to bring us here on time I cannot imagine. It seems as if all the demons of hell were in league on that wild night to entrap me in this network of trouble," continued the young man, wringing his hands in anguish. "My poor Carlota, my poor Carlota!" cried he in great excitement, "would I had been lost in the storm that almost sunk our ship than live to face this awful crime. I have sinned beyond forgiveness. I have wrecked the life of my dear Carlota. I have ruined the happiness of your beautiful daughter, and I see no way out of this great trouble," exclaimed he, wildly, "but for me to die!

"Don Alfonso," he said, but now more calmly, "you have most patiently heard me to the end, which was more than I had a right to expect, and I now place myself entirely at your mercy. If my blood can wipe out this act of mine, it is yours," said Manuel, with the calmness of despair.

"Stop, my son," said Father Anselmo, rising and placing his hand on the bowed head of Manuel. "Stop, my son," repeated the venerable father. "Talk not of shedding blood. You have been in sore straits, and grievously tempted to do wrong, but your repentance and your sufferings will atone for much. Though most unworthy as we are to receive them, our mistakes are oftentimes returned

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to us in blessings through the intercession of the saints and by the medium of confession and constant prayer. We must now undo, as far as we can, the wrong you were driven to commit. But now let Don Alfonso speak."

"Manuel," said Don Alfonso, gravely, "I wish I might recall the mistakes of this fatal night for your sake as well as my own. I do not want your life. I saved it once when you were a child, and I could not take it now, though I confess there was murder in my heart when you began your confession. I cannot hold myself entirely blameless, Manuel, for the prospect of your great wealth for my daughter influenced me against the tears and the pleadings of my wife, who predicted that nothing good would come of such a marriage to any of us. I will take my punishment for I deserve it as much as you do, and to my wife and daughter I will explain that the marriage was not legal, and nothing further will ever be mentioned concerning it. My daughter will return to the convent where we once had hopes of her taking vows. She may be willing to do so now," said Don Alfonso, sadly.

"Don Alfonso," said Manuel, grasping his hand, "you are a noble and generous man and God will reward you for the forbearance you have shown me, but do not, I pray you, influence your daughter to a convent life, because of that night's work. I will gladly give her half my fortune and with it she can do much good."

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“No, Manuel, I will not take your money for my daughter; my eagerness to secure it once has taught me a bitter lesson. It might entail a curse to touch it now. Return to your wife, Manuel, and happiness and peace will come to you in time. We may never meet again, but before we part I wish you to feel that I have no enmity towards you, and I wish you a long and happy life with the wife of your choice.”

Soon after his farewell to Manuel, Don Alfonso ordered his conveyance and set out for home. The storm was over. The afternoon sun shone warm and bright and the birds, merrily singing, were almost bursting their little throats with joy at the brightness of the day. Little praiseful songs they were full of gladness and hope. As note after note poured forth the playful breezes caught them up and joined in the carol that went singing through the trees, rustling and fluttering the leaves in perfect harmony with the music of the birds. The recently washed foliage of the manzanita shone and sparkled with a luster almost like glass, and the birds, as they sang in their fairy bowers, coquettishly turned their bright eyes from side to side as if beholding the reflection of their beauty mirrored in the glossy surface of the leaves.

The long limbs of the oaks and sycamores which, on that dark night stretched their great lengths over the road and wildly and tragically

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waved a warning to Señora Gonzales, as she entered the old Don's grounds, now hung motionless over the path. But the commotion made by the carnival of songsters reveling in their dark green depths proved to the Senora that they were inhabited by more harmless spirits than she imagined them to contain when they first passed beneath their giant boughs.

The Señora was happy, happier than she ever expected to be again after her nights of terror. Her prayers, she felt, had been answered, for she was leaving that abode of unfriendly spirits without further harm to her family—her cherished daughter was by her side. Why it was Christina had not been asked to remain with her husband, the Señora did not know, and for the present did not care. She was too overjoyed in taking her daughter away to worry about the future. Don Alfonso had not enlightened her in regard to the mystery of Christina's going or staying before they started, and she would not ask him now.

Thinking regretfully over the happenings of the last few days, the Don silently drove his horses along the road over which he had gone so many times at Don Rafael's invitation. He felt grieved and disappointed over the result of his last visit. How to make his wife understand that the marriage was no marriage without telling her too much, perplexed and bothered him sorely. They were well on their way toward home before he

could bring himself to speak on the subject. When the Señora heard that the marriage was illegal and Christina had been told that she was still Christina Gonzales, Don Alfonso then said that the consequences of their midnight visit to the old Don's must ever remain a secret among them. He wished them never to mention the unfortunate marriage to him, or discuss it between themselves. Christina, he added, would return to the convent the next day, and he hoped in her school life she would forget her late experience.

During Don Alfonso's charge to his wife and daughter the Señora frequently made the sign of the cross. She still felt that the evil spirit of the old Don had not been far away and would continue to follow them. Here again was some new and strange mystery to forever haunt her. She knew how useless it was to further question her husband and the great satisfaction she could have received by reminding Don Alfonso that she had said nothing good could come from such a marriage, was lost in consequence of the perplexing questions now in her mind regarding it.

Christina, thoroughly mystified and awed into silence by the earnestness of her father's manner, sat clasping and unclasping her tiny hands beneath her mantle. The presence of the wedding ring on her finger had not been forgotten by her for a moment, and she said to herself, as she slowly turned the ring about, "If I am not Manuel's wife,

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I have no right to wear this ring, but I have a right to know why the marriage was not legal, and I intend to find out some day. If my father does not remember and ask me for it, I will keep it and it may be the means of my learning the secret of that hasty union." Christina had too much of her father's nature to tamely submit to the dictation which her mother received so meekly. She felt, child as she was, that her youth and ignorance had been taken advantage of for some selfish purpose, and in her little heart she rebelled against the injustice of being chosen for such an end.

She was very beautiful and an unusually bright girl for her years. But she had her ideas of what a courtship and wedding should be, and to her mind it was nothing at all like the strange scene in which she had taken part. The admiring glances she had received from the gaily dressed young men who dashed by her window on horseback, had taught her that the horrified gaze from Manuel's eyes was not love or admiration. His sad face she could never forget or even one detail of that night of terror, no matter what her father's orders had been. She believed she and Manuel were both victims of old Don Rafael's wicked designs. Whatever plot the old man had in view Christina was satisfied that Manuel had no part in it. The look of suffering on his face had revealed that plainly to her. "What beautiful eyes he has," thought she, recovering her spirits and laughing softly to

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herself, "but I am very glad that my name is still Christina Gonzales.

"Yes, my father has forgotten the ring, so I will keep it and wear it on a ribbon around my neck, then I shall have a secret about the handsome Manuel as well as he. Such a fortunate girl as I am," reasoned Christina mischievously, "I have always loved a mystery, and here is one all my own. I think I must have inherited my father's love for secrets and his talent for keeping them," continued she, still thinking as she demurely veiled her roguish eyes and promised to obey her father's commands never to speak of that night's experience to any one. "But," she vowed to herself, "I will wear this talisman to remind me of my promise, and if I can I will try and forget that Manuel has such lovely eyes."

Christina's ring was safe from discovery. When she returned to school the next day, it hung from a silken cord about her neck. Still the memory of a sad face and the secret ending of the unhappy marriage often came between her and her studies. In vain were all her efforts to keep the promise and banish in forgetfulness the events of that wretched night. She wondered if the ring did not do as much towards keeping her interest in the mystery alive as it reminded her to forget. And yet nothing would have induced her to part with the charm so closely connected with her strange and tragic romance.

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Two years or more had passed since Don Rafael's death, and in that time Christina had but twice heard Manuel's name mentioned. It was while at home for her vacation that she learned from the gossip of the servants that Manuel had closed his father's house soon after the funeral and returned to Mexico. Then at another time she heard he had married and gone abroad with his wife. As time passed Christina's desire to learn more about her marriage increased, but her opportunity to do so was limited. The secret was not shared by many and her father was the only one she could ask. She knew from him there was nothing to expect. But the ring would surely some day place her in possession of the information which her father withheld. So, with perfect faith in her talisman to unravel for her this mystery, Christina patiently waited. Greatly to the disappointment of her father and mother, Christina did not take kindly to a convent life. She loved the sisters and was interested in their work, but said she felt too worldly to take the holy vows. After four years of school life she returned to her home.

Bright, beautiful and with many accomplishments to add a value to her natural charms, Christina was a brilliant addition to the society of the gay Spanish colony. She rode and danced and sang with an attractiveness not equalled by other Spanish maidens of her acquaintance. Among the bountiful gifts, so lavishly bestowed by nature on her,

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was a musical voice of such peculiar sweetness and power that the fame of it had gone leagues beyond her little world. Even the birds that made their home in the tangle of vines near her window, jealously paused to listen and wonder what creature had rivaled them in producing such heavenly notes. Christina gloried in her matchless beauty and marvelous voice with an enjoyment which only youth and happiness showered with so many blessings can ever hope to attain. Suitors she had by the score; many a rich grandee of Mexico and Alta California knelt at her feet and sought her hand, but sought in vain for she told them all she had no love to give them. Don Alfonso, who had come so near wrecking the happiness of his beautiful child once, would do nothing to influence her now. He was glad she had forgotten her marriage by the old Don's death-bed and since looked at life with such happy eyes. Little did Don Alfonso dream that the mystery of her marriage to Manuel and the possession of the wedding ring kept her from thinking of love and marriage with another. But a change was coming over the gay and happy life she led. War had been declared with Mexico and all the brave sons, loyal to her interest, hastened to enroll themselves as the defenders of their country. No more moonlight rides with the gallants and chaperoning *duennas*! No more dancing of the fandango till the small hours of the morning! No more love-making under the windows of

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laughing-eyed Señoritas! The coquettish glances ceased and in their place came unbidden tears. The sad and anxious lives of mother, sister and sweetheart, and their care for the wounded, sick and dying, left no heart for pleasure.

Foremost among the helpers in the improvised hospitals was Christina. She, at the first call for nurses, had freely offered her help to care for the stricken soldiers. Busy from morning till night, assisting the good sisters to do for the suffering men, Christina had little time or inclination now for her once absorbing thought. Once again she had heard of Manuel through the chatter of the servants. This time she learned that his wife had died abroad, and that he had returned to California and taken up arms in defense of the flag he loved. Old Don Rafael's house, by Manuel's orders, was one of the first to be opened for the sick and wounded, and word had been left not to spare any comforts that money could buy for the sufferers. Almost a year had been passed by Christina in unremitting attention to her work as hospital nurse. It was work in which she excelled with a fitness quite remarkable in one so young. While her beautiful face and musical voice aided much to cheer and encourage the spirits of the soldiers languishing on their cots, Christina felt well repaid in the satisfaction of knowing that nature's gifts to her were the means of giving pleasure and soothing pain at a time when they were most needed.

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One day there came a messenger from the "Don Rafael Hospital" saying there were not sufficient nurses for the sick and wounded that crowded the place and "would the good sisters send needed help at once?" When Christina heard that several of the nurses were to be sent there without delay, she signified her desire to go with them. "Her patients were all doing well," she said, "and she was more needed at the other place where she heard the fever had broken out afresh." But in her heart she knew that her longing to visit the old Don's house was quite as great as her wish to help the sisters. So, as a nurse, Christina returned to the place where, several years before, at midnight, she had married Manuel, the son of Don Rafael. Feeling assured she had forgotten the marriage and knowing there would be nothing in her busy life to remind her of it, Don Alfonso made no objection to his daughter's change of place. How little did he know that in her eagerness to solve this secret she caught at every straw of hope and believed that by returning to the old house she might do so.

Could Manuel see her now he would give more than one glance at her perfect type of Spanish beauty, charmingly enhanced by her simple dress, in which she looked more bewitching than in any of the rich costumes she had formerly worn.

For the first few weeks at the "Don Rafael Hospital" Christina had little time to think about

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her ring or its connection with the place. Help was indeed needed and the constant demand on her time kept her occupied till late at night. Then, like a tired child, she sought her couch and peacefully slept without a thought of the old Don or his ghost. Days and weeks passed quickly, yet Christina found no interval of rest from her labors among the patients. Soldiers there were with gaping wounds, while dying men occasionally required her attention. She did not stop to think of her own wants or take the time for selfish pleasure. Her soft and pretty hands, with comfort in their touch, smoothed the brow of many a dying youth who, with his last breath, blessed the Señorita for her kindness to him.

It was with this spirit of goodness enthroned in her heart that Christina continued to work for the suffering men. Her face ever shining with sympathy and love, became to them almost saintly in its purity. Like a blessing fell the magic sweetness of her voice on the ears of the suffering ones, as each evening she sang for them the vesper hymn. Often, when bending over the cot of a dying man, he, with eyes dimmed by the mists of coming death, turned in rapture to gaze in her lovely face, thinking it a picture of the Madonna on which they rested.

At the close of a long and sultry day, Christina, who was almost exhausted from heat and fatigue, had gone out for a moment's rest. A refreshingly

cool breeze was beginning to blow and as she wearily leaned against a large tree and inhaled the scented evening air, it was in the enjoyment of a pleasure faithfully earned. So different it was from the close room and fever infected atmosphere that the change seemed almost like heaven to the tired girl. As she stood thus, dreamily lost in thought, she became aware of an unseen presence near her, urging her to go to the old Don's room without delay. As she unconsciously took a step forward, in obedience to this strange summons, she saw one of the hospital doctors coming hurriedly towards her.

"Señorita," he said, as he paused at her side, "in one of the lower rooms, at the farther end of the house, I have a dangerously wounded young officer requiring immediate attention. He has been stricken with the fever, and in his delirium it is almost impossible to manage him. His nurse, who is also his servant, is prostrated from overwork. We are short of help in that part of the building, and I am forced to ask your aid. Since learning of your great success with fever patients, I shall count myself fortunate to secure you for a few hours, if no more. I know what you have voluntarily done for our suffering men and regret to ask more of you, knowing how exhausted you must be with a hard day's work."

"I am not tired now, Doctor," said Christina, as she rapidly walked with him to the house.

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“Renewed strength has suddenly been given me for this patient of yours, but I cannot explain why or for what purpose. I only know that the fatigue and weariness from which I suffered a short time ago has in some strange and unaccountable manner dropped from me like a garment.”

As she walked past the place where she had labored for so many weeks she did not pause or hesitate, but with an intuition that it was in the old Don's apartment where the sick man lay, she went straight on to the entrance of that well remembered room. Moving quickly, as if still obeying instructions from this unseen power, Christina entered the dimly lighted space and approached the bed where rested the wounded man.

The mere outlines of a form was all she could see of her new patient, in the shadows that hung heavily over that part of the room, but how strangely familiar in the half light each article of furniture appeared. Even the bed, tenanted as it was on the night Don Rafael died, revived the memory of that fearful time. Once more in that chamber she stood at the bedside of a dying man, but death had no terrors for her now, and she resolved, in the confidence of her new-born strength, to fight the grim visitor which again hovered over that bed. The suffering man, raving in delirium, was constantly moving his head from side to side and wildly striking with his hands at imaginary foes. Sitting down by his side, Chris-

tina took hold of the hands that were so persistently beating the air, and gently but firmly held them while she spoke to him in a soothing voice, such as she would use to a sick child. In a little time the tense muscles of his arms relaxed and the hands, from which all strength had gone, fell limp and heavily at his side. Then the nurse placed her fingers on the restless moving head, which burned hot under their light touch. The effect of the cool, moist hands on the parched skin of the patient was wonderfully noticeable. The nervous motions soon grew less, and the muttering almost ceased. In a few moments more he was so quiet that she dressed and bathed the fevered wound and moistened his parched lips with a cooling drink that the doctor had left. Now moving softly about, she threw wide the windows and let in the fragrant night air which blew fresh from the ocean. Placing the dimly burning light behind a screen, she left the soft moonlight to flood the room and cast its ghostly shadows on the wall. How gaunt and hollow-eyed the sick man looked as he turned his head to follow her motions about the place.

The doctor had said that a few hours' sleep was the best medicine he could have, but unless there was this repose for him, he could not live another day. "Give him the medicine as directed, Señorita, and may the saints help you to do the rest," added the doctor, as he left her to her work.

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Seating herself by the bed, Christina again took the hands which were beginning to move about once more, and while gently stroking them she sang, in soft, low tones, an evening hymn. Over and over she repeated the comforting words, with a voice so charmingly sweet and clear that the sick man's wandering mind was controlled and centered on the girl who had so evidently magnetized him with this wonderful power of her voice. The room to him now was full of angels instead of the demons that had haunted him for days. The look of pain and suffering gradually left his face, and he closed his eyes with a long restful sigh at being freed from such tormenting forms. Gradually he fell asleep, with the refrain of that entrancing music mingling with his dreams. Then from this soothing melody there was evolved such joyful notes, that it appeared to Christina she was not singing alone. Other voices had surely joined in this song of praise. Words and music came unbidden to her lips, and the glorious hymn, so divinely sung, penetrated to every part of the room with a ring of gladness and joy seldom heard. Now, borne on the still night air, it was wafted through the open window, and faintly-sweet was heard by the faithful sisters watching in another part of the house, and hailed by them as an omen of peace for their troubled land.

They did not know that it came from the throat of the exhausted nurse whom they had relieved a

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few hours before. Exhausted no longer, but with a freshness which could only come from days of rest, she continued long to sing and with no sign of weariness. And still the young officer slept, with his hands closely clasped in her own healing palms. More gently, more sweetly now the notes fell on the sick man's ears, like the faintest echo of an æolian harp, and the fair singer's breath, as it fanned his face, was to him like the perfume from the heart of a dewy rose. Whence came the strange attraction which Christina had for the young officer? She knew it was unlike the interest she had felt for her other patients, and this magic of her voice and hands, doubly strong now, seemed a new power given her for this case alone. As she slowly passed her hands over those fevered ones, she knew there was healing in their touch.

When, later, the doctor made his visit, he expected to find the poor officer much worse, as he had been failing since the morning, but what was his astonishment as he neared the room to hear the sweetest voice he had ever heard, singing softly as a mother would sing to her child, such touching hymns and cradle songs. As he entered and approached the bed he found, to his surprise, the sick man quietly sleeping.

"If you can keep him so for some time longer, Señorita," whispered the doctor, "I shall have great hopes of his recovery."

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Christina nodded her head in response to him, without pausing in her work. For two hours more she kept him sleeping through the enchantment of her voice and hands. Then, as if nature was satisfied and refreshed, the sick officer slowly moved his head and opened his eyes. Such beautiful eyes they were, as he turned them full on his nurse! "I dreamed of angels," he said, then closed his eyes again and lay quite still.

Those beautiful eyes! Christina had seen them before, but where? Backward her thoughts flew to that wild night; to Don Rafael's death-bed, and she saw again, through the vista of years, the mournful, pleading and terror-stricken glance cast on her seven years ago in this very room. Yes, this was Manuel, the old Don's son, and she now understood the strange attraction which drew her towards him. But this newly-acquired strength and healing gift, from what source had it come? She knew the patient had gained marvelously by this singular treatment in the short time she had been sitting by him. In answer to her question came the thought that this magical art was wrought by her talisman, her own and his mother's wedding ring! A bond between her and the sainted woman had thus been formed, and the hand that once wore the jewel was surely directing and powerfully aiding her in the treatment of this sick and wounded man. She no longer marveled that hymns and cradle songs of which she never heard or sang before

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had come to her in the night. The mother's spirit, through her, was singing to her son as she had done when he was a child. When next the doctor came he gave the nurse much hope that her patient would live.

"By what means did you accomplish so much, Señorita?" said the doctor. "Tell me your secret and I will make my fortune."

"I sang to him. You heard me," she simply replied.

"Yes, I heard you, but it was not as others sing. Your voice would almost restore the dead to life, and there is no medicine that can equal its power to heal. This patient is yours, give him all the time you can, you are needed here more than you are in the other rooms. Go now and take a long rest and I will sit here awhile."

It was at the break of day when the young officer again opened his eyes, but the beautiful vision of his dreams was gone. When Christina left the sick room she went out of doors to inhale the fresh morning air. The darkness and stillness of early dawn was yet over the place. A few belated stars faintly twinkled, and the moon was now low in the heavens, as she passed into the grounds. Under the trees the shadows remained thick and heavy as on the night previous, for nature was still resting from her labors of the past day. Occasionally could be heard the sleepy twittering of birds, and then came an interval of silence almost profound.

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Out in the open again where there had been no change since she stood there some hours before, Christina could almost fancy for the moment that her night's work had been one of imagination, but her knowledge of who the sick man was forbade her long to forget. A refreshing wind was blowing from the ocean and gave promise of more coolness for the suffering men than they had known for several days. Don Rafael's land extended to the sea, and as Christina walked slowly in the direction of the beach she lived over and over again the remembrance of her first meeting with Manuel.

At last she had again met the young Don in his father's house, and her mind was in such a tumult over the great discovery that she knew she must have time to think before taking her rest or returning to the sick man's room. She wondered if, when the light of reason came to his mind, he would know her, recognize in her the shrinking and frightened child he had married at his father's death-bed. She also asked herself what the result of this meeting would be and if he would reveal to her the tantalizing secret that had perplexed her all these years. With feet that kept pace with the rapidity of her thoughts she continued to walk up and down on the white sands of the shore. The glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes produced by the excitement of her discovery in the sick room transfigured the Madonna face, which had become hers into the brilliant and fascinating beauty it wore

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before she had grown familiar with so much suffering.

"Yes," she thought, "I have been guided by a spirit to Don Manuel's bedside and have been granted the power to heal his wounds. I will make him well with the help of the saints. Then I shall ask him to explain why we were unwillingly compelled to go through the ceremony of marriage the night his father died. I wonder," said she to herself, brightening and laughing at the thought, "if any nurse ever had such an interesting patient before or one whom they were more anxious to save. The sisters all say I have a special gift for helping the sick, so I will devote my life to the work, as I never intend to marry now. My little romance will be ended in the same room where it began when this young man is able to talk, for I will then have a right to some of his confidence, after saving his life."

For several days the most careful nursing was given the young officer before he was pronounced out of danger, and then, as the fever left him, he lay white and still on the pillows, with no desire to speak or move. But his wide open eyes, which followed his nurse as she moved about the place, proved he was taking an interest in life once more. Christina, attending to his wants, was often quietly amused at the puzzled expression his face wore as he seemed vainly trying to remember where he had seen her before.

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One morning, after a refreshing night's sleep, he asked in a faint voice, "Señorita, can you tell me how I came here? This was my father's house and this is the room where he died. The last I can remember was falling from my horse."

"You were brought here by your servant, Señor, and given this room, as it was the only vacant one in the building. You needed quietness and much attention. Your wounds were very bad and the doctors did not think then you could live many days."

"And you, Señorita, have you nursed me since I came here?"

"After the first few days, Señor, when your servant broke down from overwork, then you were given to me."

"And you sang to me? I recall in my delirium the voices of angels who sang so sweetly that they drove away the fiends who were trying to tear out my heart. In listening to you I forgot the pain of my wounds, and dreamed most heavenly dreams."

"You are talking beyond your strength," quietly observed his nurse. "The doctor says if you excite yourself, you will have a return of the fever."

"Then sing to me and I will lie quite still and look at you."

"If you will close your eyes, Señor, I will do so. I cannot sing if you watch me," said she, noticing and fearing the admiration which shone in them.

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Obediently the sick man closed his eyes and Christina began to sing those charming old Spanish songs of love and war. At first she was a little nervous, but, as the patient's eyes remained closed, she soon forgot herself and sang several ballads without stopping, till, glancing towards the bed, she saw the young officer's eyes were wide open and intently watching her.

"Pardon me," he said guiltily, as she paused and turned away, "I could not help it. I found I wanted to see the singer as well as hear her sing."

"I am afraid you are getting to be an unruly patient, and I shall have to give my place to one of the sisters."

"Do not, I beg of you," said he, sadly frightened. "If you send me another nurse, I shall surely die. I could not help looking at you, Señorita,—for you are so beautiful. I pray you to forgive me this time, I will not offend again if you promise to stay with me."

Christina, conscious of burning cheeks and a wildly beating heart, saw she must indulge her patient or he would surely bring on the fever again, so she gave the required promise on condition that he would obey her while she remained his nurse. After getting her promise, the sick man lay back on his pillows, happy and contented in the belief that a great calamity to himself had been averted. Christina anxiously wondered what would happen next. She knew she must be prepared to humor

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him for several days to come. She dreaded to have him discover who she was until he was well and strong. When she could no longer forbid his talking, he would be sure to ask a number of things. To guard against these surprises, she felt she must have leisure to think over what was best for her to do, so, on the doctor's next visit to his patient, she escaped to the beach, there to plan how to evade the many questions which shone from his eyes and had lingered on his lips for days. "I can give him my second name, Benita, and my mother's family name," she thought. "There will be no wrong in that while he is sick, but when he is well I will tell him my full name." The doctor had told her only that morning that the young man needed as careful nursing now as he did at first, for there was always danger of a relapse, and she realized that her answers to him must be as guarded as possible. The least hint of a mystery in reference to herself or the knowledge of who she was, would create excitement in the mind of her patient and perhaps undo all the good she had done.

He frequently begged her to sing to him, and without being requested to do so always closed his eyes, keeping them shut the while as he knew to look at his nurse was the signal for her to stop. Suddenly one day he opened them as the fair singer began her song and asked, "Señorita, where have I seen you previous to your coming to nurse me?"

Your face is quite familiar at times and I puzzle my head till it aches, trying to remember where we could have met."

"You saw me in your delirium, Señor, and my face made an impression on your mind."

"Yes, it must have been so," he remarked, half satisfied, "for I do not think I could have forgotten your face had I ever seen it before this. Tell me your name and where you have lived," said he persistently.

"Near hear always. I was born in this neighborhood, but the most of my life has been passed in the convent of the good sisters. I am sometimes called 'Benita'."

"And have you never been in the city of Mexico?"

"Never, Señor. I hoped to visit there with my parents, but this cruel war prevented our going. Since then I have given my time to nursing the sick and wounded as have many others of my companions."

"The saints bless you for that. The doctor says I owe my life to you, but in trying to heal my wounds you have been the cause of another in my heart, far deeper and more painful than was the first. I have grown to love you passionately, Señorita, and unless you will promise to love me and become my wife, I do not care to recover. I began to live for you and love you while yet in my delirium, and long before I could speak I knew

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you belonged to me. Does not your heart tell you so, *Mia Benita*?"

"Do not, Señor, do not agitate yourself. It is bad for you," cried Christina, now thoroughly alarmed at his flushed cheeks and growing excitement. "Give me time to think. I have never thought you would care for me, and I cannot give you an answer at present. When you are better, I will be glad to do so."

But Manuel's agitation was now beyond all control. He begged, prayed and implored her to give him some hope that she would return his love. Such passionate wooing she had never witnessed before, and the danger to her patient was growing greater each moment. What could she do? What must she do? So distressed and fearful of what the consequences would be if she did not favorably answer him, that it made the poor girl almost hopeless with despair.

The look of desperation in Manuel's eyes, so like the remembered expression that had haunted her for years, convinced her that there was only one answer to be given to his pleadings now. She hastened to assure him that she could care for him, and then, in answer to a still more passionate appeal, reluctantly confessed she loved him, but said he must not talk of marriage until he was well, then she had much to tell him that might influence their future lives and possibly prevent their marriage.

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At the mention of an obstacle to their union, Manuel jealously asked her if she had ever loved before. When she hastily assured him she had not, he grew quite calm again, and said he was willing she should take her own time to disclose to him her secret. He was well satisfied to know that she was free to marry and loved no other.

Christina, vexed, frightened, and amused in turns, at the continuation of her romance in the old Don's room, was still much troubled over this new complication of her affairs. Manuel had taken advantage of his weakness to compel an answer, knowing she would not refuse him, and now what to do was a problem. Destiny had indeed designed a most singular life for her, and she wondered sorrowfully if she was always to be its puppet. She was obliged to own that she had felt an interest in Manuel and that he was not indifferent to her. She had dreamed of his beautiful eyes and their mysterious marriage too many times to feel otherwise towards him. Further than that she had not allowed herself to think. And she firmly resolved not to encourage the love she now was beginning to feel for the handsome officer. Since his passionate avowal she was forced to admit that she had never met any one she could love so well. The objection, however, to their marriage seven years ago might be an objection still, and for her own peace of mind, as well as the happiness of Manuel, she would do her best to discourage any

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more love-making on his part. So unexpectedly and without warning had this impetuous young Señor confessed his love for her that Christina's head was almost turned with confusion.

How should she cope with the double task now devolved upon her, was a question she repeatedly asked herself as she sat by Manuel's bedside with both her hands rapturously clasped in his. Yet more difficult each day it was becoming to break from the spell his intense love was weaving about her. Struggle as she might she made no headway in either case. Manuel was happy and convalescing rapidly; a recovery which she dreaded now that she found the chains of love drawn tighter about her own heart. She read and sang and talked to him as the days passed on, and Manuel, obedient no longer to her commands, devoured her with eyes from which looked worlds of love for the fascinating and gifted creature who made a heaven of his sick room.

Christina was happy in spite of her resolve; happier than she had dared to hope. She had bravely given up the fight when she found she could not win, and allowed herself to love and be loved in return. She knew it was a happiness which could not last, and while she did not wish to hasten the hour, she was oftentimes feverishly anxious that Manuel should know all and end her suspense. When reading or singing her thoughts unconsciously turned to the talisman about her neck till

she had gotten in the habit of nervously turning about her fingers the silken cord which held the ring.

Manuel, watching every movement of his charming nurse, had first with slight curiosity noticed the cord and wondered what was suspended from it. As his convalescence drew to an end Christina's nervous motions with the ribbon increased. Manuel noticed more and more the movements of her hand and from curiosity grew to be jealous of the hidden charm; his vivid imagination pictured it as the portrait of some old lover or a love token from some admirer. He easily reasoned that such a beautiful girl must have had lovers by the score. Thus tormenting himself, he grew irritable, jealous and exacting, and would scarce allow his nurse time to rest or sleep. Christina, much worried by these new symptoms in her patient, could not understand the cause of his unrest, and she was aware that under the circumstances the explanation she had to make would be to her a harder trial than any she had ever suffered.

One hot afternoon, when she had allayed his suspicions by unusual gentleness and patience, he became himself once more and happily talked of their love for each other. He promised as soon as he was well she should have an engagement ring. At the mention of the word ring, Christina's hand flew to her neck, and with much confusion began nervously to handle the ribbon.

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What did it mean? Manuel, furiously jealous again, fretted and fumed and told his nurse it was the excessive heat of the room which troubled him. So Christina fanned him and sang to him until he dropped asleep. Worn out and exhausted she now sank back in her chair and closed her eyes with a long sigh of relief that her exacting patient was quiet at last. Then she slept, how long she did not know, but Manuel, awaking before her, lay quietly looking at his lovely nurse with love and adoration shining in his eyes. He recalled how cross and jealous he had become over his suspicions and he vowed to end it when she awoke by asking what it was she valued so highly on the ribbon about her neck. As she lay sleeping he could see her hand closely guarding the treasure as if to her the mysterious something was most precious. Having now determined to endure his suspense no longer, Manuel impatiently waited for her to awake and answer the question he was growing desperate to have solved.

“How could he disturb the tired girl from her few moments of rest?” he questioned. His heart reproached him for his selfishness towards her as he saw her so calmly sleeping. He realized the happiness she had brought into his life, for since the death of his loved Carlota, some years before, existence has been dreary and barren of interest to him. When the appeal was made to Mexico’s brave sons for help, then he aroused himself and

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was one of the first to respond to her call. Even now, in his absorbing devotion to Christina, the gentle and gifted girl who charmed him back to life and all its interests, was ever entwined a thought for the sainted Carlota, who, to him, was a beautiful gift which he had treasured in life and still treasured as one of the sweetest memories which crowned his younger years. No one could replace the affection he felt for his early love in the period which was all her own. Enthroned in his heart she reigned supreme in the short season of bliss which had been allotted to them. The months of loneliness and grief for his lost one had matured and developed the manhood of the young officer as years of happiness could not have done, and Christina, who from childhood unselfishly gave her first thoughts for others, had also grown in sweetness and grace by her loving devotion to the sick and suffering in the work she had so heroically undertaken. The ripeness of her mind, almost phenomenal in one so young, gave an added thoughtfulness to her character, making her a most fitting companion for Manuel with his more excitable nature.

Lately Christina, with wisdom far beyond her years, had been taking her heart to task for so weakly giving away its love before she could disclose the secret of her life. While she confessed her love for him, Manuel knew she was not as happy as he could wish her to be. He believed that she was treasuring her affections and grudgingly

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giving a tithe of the fullness and richness of the love which he knew was buried in her heart. While waiting for her to awaken he jealously imagined that the story she had to relate must in some way be connected with the charm she wore. This, he felt, accounted for the reluctance with which she expressed her love for him. The more he dwelt on the subject the more impatient he became, until he could no longer endure the companionship of his own thoughts. Chained to a sick bed and feeble yet from the dreadful wound he had received, Manuel chose to feel neglected because his charming nurse could so calmly sleep on and leave him in such doubt and trouble. At last, rendered almost distracted by the complications of the several mysteries that beset him, he was about to speak her name and beg her to talk to him when Fate, more kind and considerate than he to the lovely girl, took pity on her and chose this occasion to solve for them both the riddle.

It had lately been a source of many anxious moments on Christina's part as to the time the story should be told and the consequences thereof. Dreaming of danger to her talisman, she gave a start and threw up her hands to protect it. She dreaded, even in her sleep, a premature disclosure of her secret, but this sudden movement was the means which quickly and happily ended the mystery. By suddenly throwing up her hands the slender cord, which was securely twined about her

fingers, came apart and was pulled from its place. This rapid motion threw the ring on the bed by Manuel's side. One quick glance he gave to the ring and then his hand closed over it. Christina, awake now, with a frightened cry, eagerly sought for her lost treasure. But Manuel was too quick for her; he secured her hand and cried, "The ring, *mia* Benita! How came you to have it? Answer me quickly."

Christina, white and trembling, as she appeared on the night the ring was placed on her finger, could not utter a word, but sank back in her chair almost fainting from the shock which she had received. Now the time had come and she could no longer keep her secret; she would give it up and then leave the place where, in spite of her misgivings, she had been so happy.

"The ring, *mia* Benita!" reiterated Manuel, "tell me how you came by it. It was my mother's wedding ring," said he excitedly. After repeatedly imploring her to speak, Christina, with much effort faintly replied, "You, Don Manuel, you placed it on my finger seven years ago in this very room by the side of your father's death-bed."

"Saints in heaven!" exclaimed Manuel, "are you Christina Gonzales, daughter of Don Alfonso? I heard with regret years ago that you had taken vows and became a nun."

"No, Manuel, I did not take the vows as my parents wished me to, though at one time it was

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rumored that I had done so. I am Christina Benita Gonzales still."

"And did you know, *mia* Benita, that I was Don Rafael's son when you came to nurse me?"

"No, Manuel, I did not know who you were till I had been with you some time. I remembered your eyes and knew you as soon as you opened them after your sleep."

"And you have nursed me back to life, knowing the injury I did you so long ago?"

"I know nothing, Manuel. My father did not choose to tell me more than that the marriage was not legal. He forbade me ever to mention the marriage or ask a question regarding it. My mother was not permitted to know more than I did, and in all these years we have never spoken of that night's visit."

"Does your father know you are nursing me, darling?" said Manuel tenderly.

"No, Manuel, my father is in poor health and does not ride so far as this place now. He knows that I am here and gave his consent that I should come and help to nurse the sick."

"And you have worn this ring about your neck all these years?"

"Yes, it was forgotten by you as well as by my parents. At first in a spirit of mischief I resolved to keep it a secret, but as time rolled on I grew much attached to my talisman, as I called it, and felt that it would some day be the means of my

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learning more about the marriage. I confess to you, Manuel, that after my fright was over and I had heard from my father that the marriage was not legal I became very curious to know more. Also I became quite indignant, for I felt my youth had been taken advantage of for some selfish reason and I rebelled at being chosen to take the part I did.

"I knew you were as unwilling to go through the ceremony as I was," continued Christina, "and I never forgot the look of utter hopelessness in your eyes. I cannot describe to you my feelings when I discovered you in your father's room and bed. When you so passionately declared your love for me I was frightened out of my senses, and did not wish to give you an answer till you were better, and I could explain to you that I was Christina Gonzales. You know, Manuel, you were very sick and the doctor had warned me not to allow you to become excited. But you were such a persistent lover," said Christina, with a sorrowful smile, "that I was compelled to favorably answer you against my better judgment."

"But why against your judgment, my darling? You love me, do you not?" said Manuel, holding her hands and looking fondly into her eyes with joy beaming from his own.

"Yes, Manuel, that is the hardest thing I have to confess. I had unconsciously learned to love you, but when I knew it was so then I tried not to

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show it for I was afraid there might still be objections that would prevent our marriage from becoming legal now as there had been in the past."

"No, my darling, there is nothing to prevent our marriage now. In proof of it I will take this precious ring of my mother's, which you have cared for so lovingly, and place it on your finger as your engagement ring. It is twice hallowed now," said Manuel, as he once again slipped the golden circlet on her slender finger and kissed the hand that wore it. "When I am well, my dear one, I will add to it a wedding ring," continued the young man solemnly. "The secret, *mia* Benita, which you had to tell has been most strangely revealed. Fate often finds very startling endings for her romances though nothing quite so wonderful as the first and second scenes which have been enacted in this room ever occurred before. Now, to make the drama complete we should be married again in this room and with the same ring."

"And we will do so," said Christina, with a happy laugh, "for I love this memento and should choose it for my wedding ring in preference to another. I also have formed quite an affection for this old place, and have spent many happy days in this room even when I felt they would not last."

"Did you know that I was furiously jealous of the hidden charm you wore about your neck, and that it was the cause of my irritable and impatient moods?"

"I never suspected it, but I used to puzzle my head for the reason of such unheard-of symptoms in a patient who was recovering as rapidly as you were."

"I know I was a great trial to you, my dear one, but the suspense was most terrible to me. I was about to throw myself on your mercy and ask you to explain what it was you preserved with such care, when Fate took the adjusting of the troublesome question out of our hands. I have yet my story to tell, and when I do I trust you will judge me as mercifully as your father did. Most nobly he treated me after my confession, and my gratitude to him for this kindness I can never forget. Yet favors untold I am still receiving through his daughter, which increases my obligation past the mark of my ability to repay. If you, my precious Benita, can forgive me when you hear my confession, I shall know that the saints have interceded for me the second time."

But Christina, glancing at the ring on her hand, which Manuel held so closely, had her own opinion about the severity of her sentence, and told him he could safely risk her displeasure. She said she was too happy to let anything disturb her now, and her low, musical laugh filled the room, frightening the hobgoblins of other days from their retreat, as Manuel retold his suspicions of the charm she wore.

A long time before Manuel was able to leave his room he had acquainted Christina with the terrible

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ordeal he had gone through on that fearful night his father died and how she had been deceived into a false marriage to secure for him his father's blessing. The ring, he said, he had not noticed, and never associated it with his mother's wedding ring. After a full confession of his trials on that night, Manuel asked Christina if she could forgive him.

"Freely and fully," she earnestly responded, "if I had anything to forgive, but I have nothing. I do not see how you could have done otherwise. You were hedged in and given no opportunity to escape from the net in which you were so irretrievably caught. It has been the romance of my life, Manuel, and now that it has turned out so happily I would not part from my connection with it for mines of gold. I have been favored in having a secret in which no one but you, Manuel, could share. This ring has been my talisman and constant companion; without it I might have been a religious recluse, for which I had no taste and was not fitted. And now more than ever do I feel that I have been exalted above others of my friends, for, by wearing this ring so many years, it became a connecting link between your sainted mother and myself. This formed a chain of love by which, through me as the medium, your mother and your sainted Carlota could aid you when you were so dangerously ill. This golden hoop will be a precious treasure to me, Manuel, as long as I

shall live. In the two great events of my life which occurred in this room it has played an important part as a messenger of good, for good did come from that which you and my father thought so evil a beginning. But tell me, Manuel, did you never think of your mother's wedding ring in all these years?"

"Often, my darling, but I thought it lost. My mother wore it till her death, and I never saw it after, though I looked for it many times among her jewels. When it dropped at my side I recognized it instantly. It is a curious ring. I admired it very much as a child and felt an interest in its history, which I had heard my mother repeatedly tell."

"Do tell it to me, dear Manuel. I have never been able to read the motto, and did not dare risk asking another to do so for me."

"The ring is very old, my father got it from a collector of rare jewels in Spain for my mother's wedding present. The legend says that it was once the engagement token of a beautiful Roman princess, whose betrothed husband received his death wound on the battlefield. With his last breath he told her that as long as she wore the ring and was faithful to him, he would be given the power to communicate with her from the spirit world. The bereaved princess wore the ring till her death, and in her will she spoke of the wonderful charm it possessed and said she wished it ever

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to be worn as a symbol of love. The motto reads :
'Faith and love will ever bring the power of magic to this ring.' "

"It is a beautiful motto indeed and most wonderfully has its promise been fulfilled. I understand now why this souvenir of the beautiful princess is still magical in its effects. It only needs the key of faith and love to unlock its secret power and bring to you messages from your sainted loved ones. We will adopt the sentiment of this motto and by our trust in each other we will ever keep alive this spirit of love which glows so brightly in our hearts. And now I have a request to make, dear Manuel. When we are married let the wedding be not only in this room but by the same good father who performed the ceremony before. In this way you will have fulfilled your father's wishes and secured your father's blessing. These are dreadful times, and with the sick and wounded all about us it is best we have a quiet wedding."

"Your request is granted, my dear one, for I should like nothing better than the plan you have proposed. This old room is endeared to me by the many happy days we have passed in it, and I hope in the future to spend years here with you by my side. But first we will have a change. Our wedding journey to Mexico and back will rest and refresh us both. The doctor said this morning that I was almost well enough to be discharged and, with a twinkle in his eye, he suggested that I

discharge my nurse; but I told him that I had engaged you for life. Then he congratulated me and said I was a fortunate patient to secure such a wonderful nurse as you had proved to be. He also said you had been like an angel of mercy to the sick and suffering men before you came to me, and he hoped I was worthy of you, my dear one. I told him I was not, but that if a wealth of love and devotion could take the place of my unworthiness, you would find no limit to the affectionate regard I bore you."

"It is sweet to be so loved," answered Christina quietly, "and there is perfect contentment in my heart now. The saints have abundantly blessed me for all I have done by rewarding me with your love and giving my romance such a fortunate ending."

"Benita," said Manuel, as he drew her fondly to him, "there are worlds of love and happiness beaming from your beautiful eyes now. I knew there were depths of affection deep buried in your heart which I had not fathomed and to which I was longing you should give expression. You have now answered my yearnings and crowned my life with such bliss as few mortals ever know. Undeserving as I am, I selfishly accept all the love that you can give, and in the perfection of my love for you I pray you may be shielded from all that could dim the happy light that shines forth with such radiance now."

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The delight of Christina's father and mother on hearing of their daughter's engagement to Manuel can be imagined, and they both, for the second time, witnessed the marriage which occurred a few weeks later in the old Don's room. The aged Father Anselmo gladly united the young people once more. He said nothing in his long life had given him more satisfaction than this second marriage of Manuel and Christina.

The Don's room was decorated with flowers for this second wedding, and instead of a dark and stormy night, the sun was shining brightly. The Señora had no fear of evil spirits now, but felt instead a great pride in the handsome bride and groom. Don Alfonso, whose conscience had troubled him not a little over the part he had played in the first marriage, seemed to throw off years of care and illness and appeared almost young again. All the convalescing soldiers who were able witnessed the ceremony and wished their beautiful nurse and the pale but handsome young officer a long life of happiness. Never before or since had the adobe house entertained such a wedding party, and never before was there a wedding party where each guest felt such adoration for the bride. At parting Christina sang for them the evening hymn, as she had nightly done since her stay in Don Rafael's house.

With tears in her eyes she bade each sister a kind farewell. The sisters, deeply grieved at

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parting with the lovely girl, returned sadly to their duties, breathing prayers for her happiness. The thoughtfulness of Don Manuel in providing so bountifully for the soldiers had made him many friends and their blessings for him, as well as for their nurse, followed them lovingly into their new and broader sphere of life.

THE ANGELS' PROMISE

AT MONTEREY BAY

*On sea-washed rocks a dainty lichen grows ;
Back from the shore are lofty cypress trees ;
And in the waves the frail anemones
Softly their purple fringes ope and close.
A lonely gull on slow wing seaward goes ;
A shallop drifts before the freshening breeze ;
Full are the lingering hours of calm and ease ;
Full is the soul, world-weary, of repose.*

*The wind is singing to the monotone
Of the deep tides ; and singing in the pines,
Through whose soft waving foliage lightly shines
The sun on silver beaches as it shone
Twelve decades past, when from the branches swung
The Mission bells that Junipero hung.*

— Virna Woods in " The Californian."

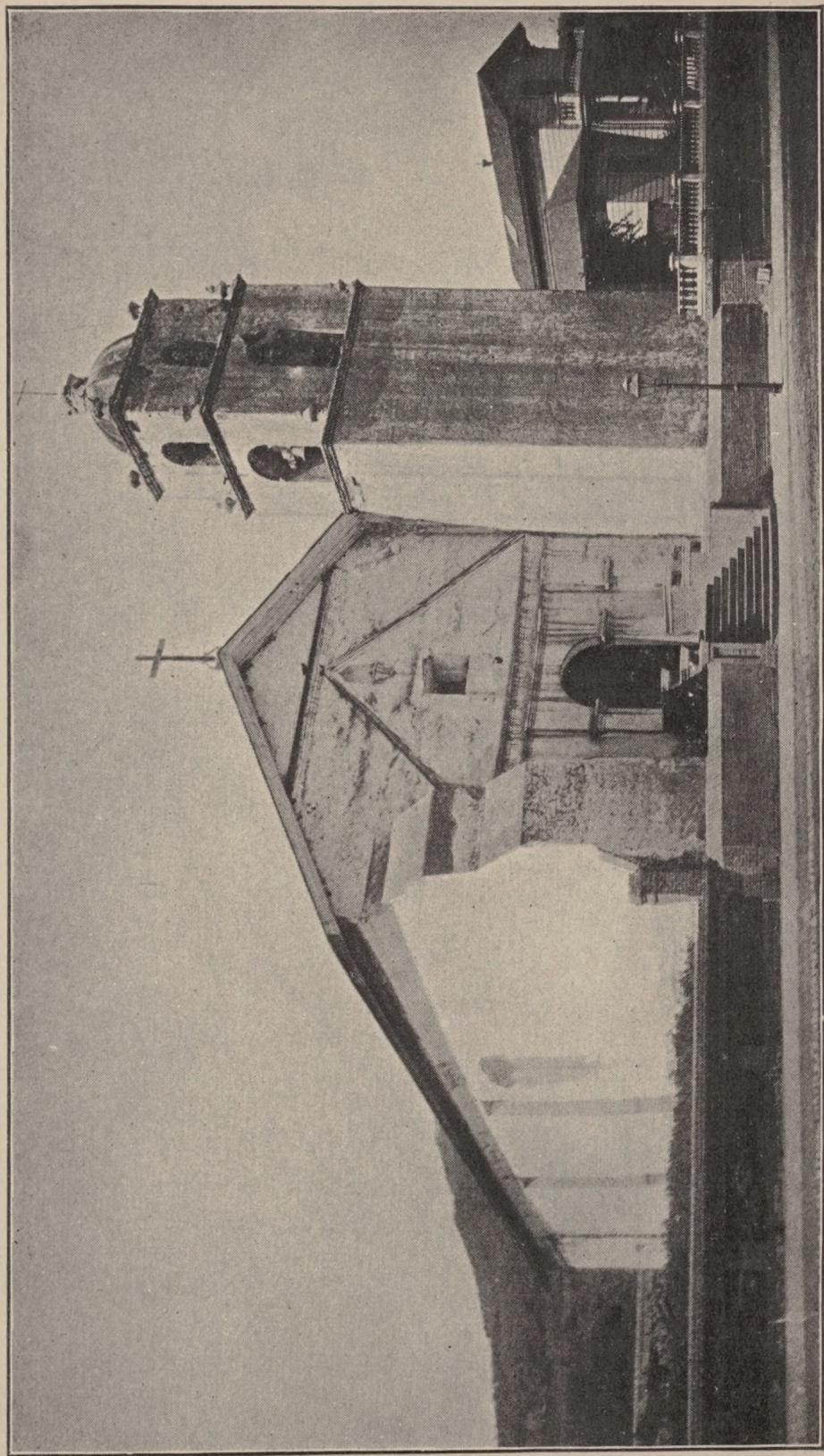
THE ANGELS' PROMISE

PEPITA stood alone by the new-made grave, silently dropping her tears on the fresh earth. To whom could she turn now for love and sympathy? Who would take the place of the dear, old man who had been father, mother and friend to her? True, the Señora had offered her a home after the old man died, but what a home compared to the one she had lost; for it was a home without love, a home without friends, that would be hers under the Señora's roof. The old Mexican, who was buried beneath the mound over which Pepita was breaking her little heart, had taken her when an infant from the arms of her dead mother, and placed her in the keeping of his sister, with whom he lived, and they had cared for her till she was old enough to care for them, and now within a year she had buried them both.

Poor Pepita! A shy, shrinking child, scarce twelve years of age and so small that she seemed years younger, stood guard over the grave of her lost friend. Her quiet life with the old people at the San Buenaventura Mission had not fitted her to take the care of the Señora's noisy children. And then she wished to go to school, to the mission school, where she was doing so well and where the

sisters spoke so kindly to her. If only she might die, she moaned, as, overpowered by her great grief, she threw herself sobbing on the mound of earth. No one wanted her and after to-night her old home would be no more, for would they not come and take away the few things from the little cabin that had been her dear refuge all her life? Yes, the few household goods must be sold to pay for the food and medicine required by the old man when he was no longer able to work and earn the pittance necessary to buy their daily bread. And now the parish had buried him ; for there was not enough money among his impoverished friends to enable them to offer such a testimony of their love.

Alas ! for the child, her only friend was gone, and poor Pepita lay sobbing on his grave till late in the night. Then, tired and worn with her grief, she at last dropped asleep. And, while she slept the soft night air gently lifted the dark locks that fell about her little, brown face and dried the tears that had fallen like rain over her dusky cheeks. One little hand held a crucifix, tightly clasped, and the other was thrown lovingly over the grave. Then she dreamed that the angels came, and fanned her with their wings and spoke words of love and comfort, promising her that she should go to her loved ones soon. How sweetly she slept only those knew who saw the smile on her face the next morning, for the angels had kept their promise. Pepita had gone home to her loved ones.



MISSION SAN BUENAVENTURA

Founded March 30, 1782

A ROMANCE OF
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO

SAN DIEGO BELLS

*Gone are the halls where long ago
There dwelt that brotherhood,
And brown bare walls and arches low
Mark where the Mission stood,
And the moping owl makes there his home,
Where he feedeth his hungry brood.*

*Miguel still lifts his lofty head
Above the mountains gray,
And Loma Point still makes his bed
Far out in the western bay ;
But the times are changed, and the days are dead,
And the friars — where are they ?*

*Changed, changed is all save yonder sea,
And yonder mountains brown,
The breakers' deep-tone symphony
Where the tide is going down,
And the voices of the Mission bells
By San Diego town.*

— S. M. H. Byers, in "Overland Monthly."

A ROMANCE OF SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO

AMONG all the mission ruins of California, San Juan Capistrano is called the most sublime, the most beautiful and the most picturesque. In its fallen greatness there is depicted in every crumbling wall and stone, the stately bearing of the grandest edifice of its time.

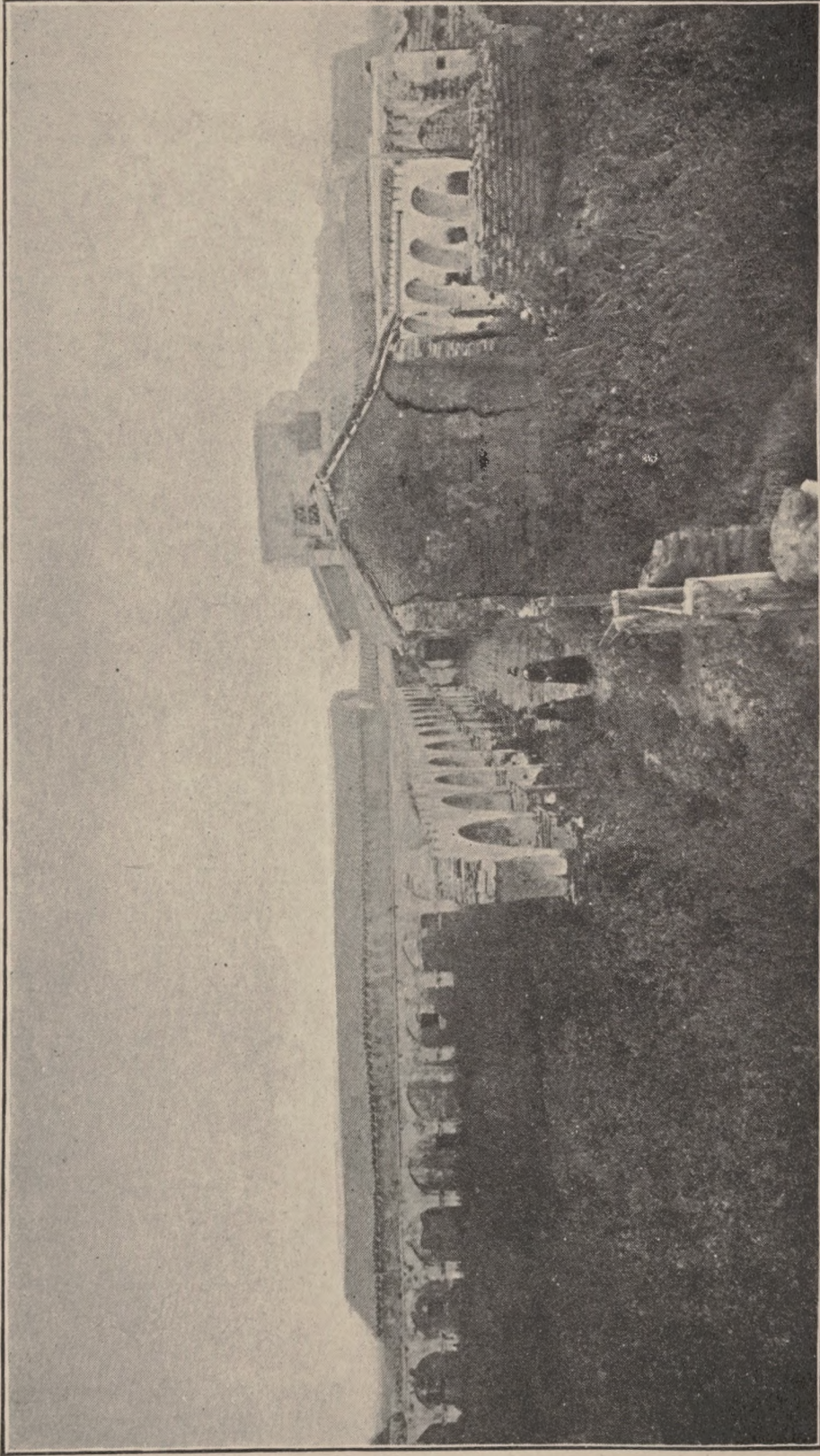
On beholding the remains of this wonderful structure one marvels at the excellence of the work which was accomplished almost entirely by Indian hands. But in every line and in every curve of this proudest of mission ruins, there is shown evidence of a master mind that guided the unskilled and savage workmen in their task. Whether it be wrapped in a mantle of fog, or bathed in the golden sunlight, whose searching rays bring into relief the scars which time and the destroying elements have made, or softened in effect by the light of the pale moon, yet at all times and in all conditions in which you view this monarch of missions your heart will thrill with reverence and love for its founder, the holy Father Junipero Serra. It was his lofty spirit and indomitable will which made it possible for his successors to accomplish in the line of mission work, such wonderful results.

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

No more attractive spot for a place of worship could have been selected than the one where the mission was located. Situated in a lovely valley some distance north from San Diego, the mission is partly surrounded by low rolling hills which reach to the ocean, completing a picture of unrivalled beauty.

The earthquake shock of 1812 which shattered the Mission of San Luis Obispo gave to San Juan Capistrano its death blow. The morning of the eighth day of December of that year, saw the chapel filled with devout Indian worshippers, and as the service progressed and the neophytes became absorbed in their devotions, the fast darkening skies passed unobserved. Soon, however, a low rumbling sound which preceded the *tremblor* was heard, followed almost immediately by a terrific shock. The lofty tower of the church swayed and bent, then fell crashing through the tiled roof with a thunderous noise, on to the heads of the panic-stricken worshippers below, crushing out the lives of all but the padre and a few fortunate neophytes.

By this tragic ending to the mission's prosperity, California lost not only her finest mission building but many rare and costly pictures and historic possessions of the church. The church was not rebuilt, but over an adjoining adobe there swung for many years the sweet bells of San Juan Capistrano.



MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO

Founded November 1, 1776

A ROMANCE OF SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO

It is in connection with this interesting mission that so many tragic tales are told, the memory of which lingers like the faint perfume of flowers in the fragrant air which so softly sighs among the ruins. Go and stand amid the broken arches and fallen walls and let the wind as it gently fans your cheek whisper to you with magic sweetness, the most thrilling tales of love and hope and despair, for amid no other ruins does the soul respond with such exhilaration or thrill with the spirit of the past as it does at San Juan Capistrano.

At one time in the mission's history a noted band of pirates infested the San Diego coast. They were the dread of the people living along the shore, for they did much harm and committed many lawless acts wherever they chose to land. Quite often their visits were made to Capistrano and at such times they intimidated the priests and neophytes and banished them from the mission; then for days together they revelled in their lawlessness in the holy place, appropriating the best of the mission's supply of food and wine and destroying much as well as carrying off large quantities when they left.

On one of their raids at Capistrano a sailor belonging to the Bonsard pirate crew brought to the home of a Mexican woman living in the vicinity, a little girl, apparently not more than a year old, and told the woman to keep it and raise it as her own, as its parents were lost at sea, and that the

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child was the only living creature saved from the wreck of their ship. The babe, when left with the woman, was utterly without clothing, other than a large piece of sail cloth in which it was wrapped.

The little stranger to San Juan was a beautiful child with its soft olive skin and clear brown eyes, while curling rings of dark hair tumbled loosely about its pretty face and head. The old Mexican woman needed no urging but took to the babe at once and gave it a place in her heart and home. Another child added to her numerous family would make no more work, she said, and as the child was motherless and fatherless, that was inducement enough for the kind-hearted woman to shelter the babe.

It was thought that the child might have been stolen for a ransom by the pirates from some vessel they had robbed, and its clothing removed to prevent detection; if so, they had missed a most important article, an article of so much value that it gave the child a standing at once as belonging to people of rank and wealth. Buried in the folds of its chubby neck and covered by the soft curling hair which fell all about it was a fine gold chain, a mere thread, which encircled the throat of the infant closely, and on the tiny clasp was engraved the name "Loma," doubtless the child's name; if it were not, the good padre made it so when he baptized the babe a few days later.

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The sailor who left the child gave into the hands of the woman some gold to buy for it the necessary clothing, saying he would come again some day and bring her more ; but to the satisfaction of all the people at Capistrano that was the last seen of the pirates in that part of the coast. In his efforts to find the parents of the child if they were living, Padre Soto caused word to be sent from mission to mission in regard to the little waif and its strange appearance at San Juan, but nothing was learned about the wreck of a ship, with the loss of all on board, or of parties who had lost a child ; so little Loma, under the kind care of Mother Marda, as she was taught to call the good Mexican woman, grew and thrived as one of her own brood.

The chain, which soon became too small for the child's neck, had been carefully preserved by Padre Soto till Loma was old enough to have the charge of it, and to know the value of the keepsake.

Only one difference in the bringing up of Loma and Marda's children did the kind padre insist upon, and that was in her education. The expense of a year's schooling in the convent at Los Angeles, he said he would defray himself when she had finished at the mission school.

While in many ways Loma was reared as one of Marda's children, nothing could make her become or appear like one of them. More and more Mother Marda became convinced that a strange bird had dropped in among her nestlings. To the padre she

told her fears, saying she did not know how she would be able to manage the child when she grew older, for Loma's imperious and strange ways puzzled her greatly. Padre Soto's answer to Mother Marda was, "Do not try to manage her, Marda. Give her the freedom to do as she chooses. Loma is a good child; the sisters love her and speak well of her work at school; she will come to no harm. Love her but let her manage herself."

And wise counsel it was, for while Loma loved her adopted mother dearly she knew Mother Marda did not understand her, and she could not endure to be taught to do things as was her foster sister Rosa.

From her earliest childhood Loma's delight was to play in the Capistrano ruins. She had built for herself in a secluded nook a little shrine of tile fragments and pieces of broken images, and there with a numerous family of dolls to whom she gave the names of her favorite saints, she passed every pleasant moment when out of school.

As she grew older her embroidery took the place of her dolls for company, and there, alone for many hours of the day, Loma jealously guarded her shrine. In all other things Loma would divide cheerfully with Marda's children, but her shrine was sacred, and she would have no intrusion in the place where she chose to indulge in day dreams. She thought often over the problem of her birth and wondered to whom she belonged, and if her

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parents were living. For Loma had known very early in life that the Mexican woman was not her real mother.

Such a beautiful high spirited girl as Loma grew to be, she charmed all the people at San Juan by her daring and fearlessness when courage was needed. And her sweet and ready sympathy for those in sickness or grief won her many friends, but she would never learn to make tortillas.

"Let Rosa do that," she would say, "Rosa loves to cook and eat; I do not."

When Pedro Mendoza told her one day at the ruins, where he had followed her, that he loved her and wanted to make her his wife, she turned her face to him with a look of surprise which he never forgot, while she quietly said, "Pedro Mendoza, I am no wife for you, do you not see it? Go and marry Rosa, she is the one you should wed. Mexicans like nice comfortable wives like Mother Marda. Rosa likes to cook and eat and sleep. She basks half her days in the sun like the green lizards here on the stones about. She will do all you tell her and make you a good wife. Even were you of my rank and I loved you, I would not live your kind of life. Bah! I hate it! It is cook and eat and sleep. And each day is like the last."

"But what will you do, Señorita Loma," said Pedro, mockingly, for he was angered at Loma's haughty manner, "You have no home, you can't

always live with old Marda. Suppose the padre tells you to marry me. Will you then?"

"Never!" said Loma, "for Padre Soto will not tell me to wed you; he knows me; you do not. What will I do? I will leave here some day when the padre tells me I may go, and I shall try to find my parents if they are living, and if they are not, I am sure I shall find some of my people. I must resemble some of my family, and the chain and the name will help me. If I fail in that, I will enter a convent and become a Sister of Charity, for I will never live the stupid life you sleepy Mexicans do."

"Have you ever thought, Loma," said Pedro, vindictively, "that you may have belonged to some one of the pirate crew who were killed in a sea fight? You may be a pirate's child, you know."

"It is not true, Pedro, and no one but a sinful-minded person would say such things to me. Am I the wicked creature a pirate's child would be? I love all who are good, and hate all who are bad, you among the number, for you are bad to have such thoughts of me, whom you have known since I was left at San Juan. Never follow me here again, for Padre Soto says a holy place is desecrated by the evil minded!" exclaimed Loma, with flashing eyes.

"Very well, Señorita, but when it is proved some day that you are a pirate's child, then maybe you will

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be glad to have an honest Mexican for your husband, for no one else will marry one of that blood."

For answer, Loma silently turned and walked into the chapel away from the angry man, leaving him uttering threats of what he would do.

Loma had received her year's schooling, as Padre Soto promised her, and on her return, the change between this life at Capistrano and the one with the gentle and refined sisters at the Sacred Heart Convent in Los Angeles, was constantly being presented to her. Now, when she felt she could endure it no longer, she went to the kind priest, who had been father and friend to her, and begged that he would assist her to find her parents.

"Send me to Mexico," she pleaded, "I am sure to find some of my friends and if they are rich they will help the mission people who have been so kind to me."

The good old padre was startled at her earnestness and hesitated to answer. He did not think the journey would be a success, but he could understand how the hope had grown with her years, and he would not shake her faith in the thought that her parents were living, by refusing her request. The thought of parting with the dear child was a hard blow for which he was unprepared. From a helpless babe until now, she had been the object of his loving care and a comfort to him in his old age. Her baby fingers had caressed the dear old face

and the infant feet had followed pattering after him as he went about his mission work. Many times from her play in the ruins had he sought her out to save her from an approaching storm and tenderly tucking the child under his robes, he would carry her to her home.

The year had been a long one that kept Loma away from the mission, and now the time had come when he must give his consent to have her go from San Juan Capistrano, perhaps forever. Then Padre Soto prayed that he might become resigned to the granting of her wish ; and, strong in the faith that he would be answered, he said she should go, with his blessing, the coming month, when Sister Ursula returned to Mexico.

Busy with the preparations for her departure, Loma thought nothing of Pedro Mendoza and his surly face, other than to be glad that he had gone on a visit to San Diego, and she hoped before he returned to be far away from the mission herself. It would be hard to part with Padre Soto and Mother Marda, her dearest and best friends, but she promised them she would return some day. A short time however before Loma was to take the vessel which would bear her, as she fondly hoped, to the home of her people, a strange and unlooked for circumstance changed all her plans.

After a restless night in which she dreamed that Pedro Mendoza was carrying her away to live with the pirates, she awakened early, glad to find she

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was still under the protection of Mother Marda and that it was only a bad dream which had troubled her. But still she could not throw off the unpleasant feeling produced by Pedro's cruel words. "You may be a pirate's child," saddened her waking moments and affected her sleeping ones, for Loma's whole life had been absorbed by the one thought that some day she would find her parents, and such a heartless shock as Pedro had given her could not be lightly thrown aside.

With a mind so disturbed there was but one place where she could find comfort and peace. To her shrine in the ruins she went with the first glimpse of the morning light and, kneeling before it, as was her custom, joined her voice with the birds, the whispering winds and rustling leaves in praise to the Virgin. In this holy place all doubts that had assailed her vanished, and the pure spirit of the girl almost severed its bonds with happiness as song after song of praise burst from her lips and went echoing through the ruins.

When Don Carlos Serrano visited his aged relative, Padre Soto, at San Juan Capistrano, he little imagined that destiny had woven a web for him in the ruined mission and was patiently awaiting his coming to entangle his heart in its meshes. It was in the early morning when Don Carlos, for the first time, visited the ruins. There he saw a picture that drove all thoughts of missions from his mind and left him such a willing victim to the wiles

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of fate that he had no desire to move from the place for he was hopelessly ensnared in love's net at last. Don Carlos had seen many pretty dark eyed señoritas, but never such a vision of loveliness as was Loma, kneeling before the shrine.

Her wondrously beautiful face turned like a flower towards the rising sun revealed the emblems of purity and love, reflected from a soul trusting in the Divine power and happy in its devotions. Unobserved and impatient Don Carlos stood waiting till Loma had finished her song of praise and gave him an opportunity to approach. When however he stood near her he felt unable to frame the words he would speak till Loma's gentle voice broke the silence with her "Good morning, Señor."

She knew he was the padre's nephew whom she heard had arrived the night previous. Loma had been a little startled when the handsome stranger suddenly appeared beside her, but had quickly recovered from her fright when she found the young Señor embarrassed in her presence.

"Your pardon, Señorita," said he, at last, as he bowed low before her, "but may I ask if you are the Goddess of these ruins and do you make your home among them? If so, the attraction is greater than I supposed. I was not prepared to find the ruins inhabited by mortals. I have heard that the spirits of those who passed away so long ago still linger about the place. But do not tell me, Señorita, that you are one of them."

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"No, Señor," said Loma, with smiles dimpling her sunny face, "no, Señor, I am not a spirit of the mission ruins and yet I do not believe the spirits haunt it more than I do. This place has been my home far more than the one where I live with Mother Marda, and at this shrine I have worshipped since childhood. This spot has become very dear to me since Padre Soto blessed it so many years ago."

"But do you never tire of it and wish for a brighter life and its pleasures? It is most unnatural, Señorita, for youth and beauty to bury itself in ruins with nothing but the romance of the past for company."

"Yes, Señor, that is very true," said Loma, "but pleasures and a gay life are not for me. I have a mission to perform and until I can accomplish that I must pray for help and guidance. Padre Soto tells me if it is their will, the saints can grant my prayers. I am happy in the hope, for my faith grows stronger each day as I kneel before this holy shrine, that my supplications will be heard and the saints will give me my heart's desire."

"A mission for one so young and beautiful, Señorita!" exclaimed Don Carlos. "Ah, Señorita, would I were a saint, then your prayers would soon be answered. Have you lost your parents, that you must pray alone at this shrine for the boon you ask?"

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"No, Señor," said Loma, sadly, "I was lost or stolen from my parents when I was an infant and left with Mother Marda by one of the pirate crew. All the mother I have ever known has been my good Marda, and Padre Soto has been padre, friend and brother to me. The dear old man! I could not love him more were he, in truth, my father. My mission is to find my parents, for I feel that they are living. If they were not, their spirits would have come to me in answer to my many prayers."

"Dear Señorita," said Don Carlos, "I implore you to let me join my prayers with yours in the hope that the saints will speedily guide you to the place where your parents dwell, for it must not be that one so young and beautiful as you are should spend all their youth, without love or pleasure, within the shattered walls of San Juan Capistrano. Let it be my mission in life to assist you, and my prayers shall be as fervent as yours if, beside you, at this altar, I may kneel. It has been my fate that I should meet you here and love you, and unless you give me hope, I will wish to die and be buried in the ruins you love so well. I pray you, Señorita, listen to my pleadings," continued Don Carlos, with passionate fervor, "and the saints will crown our love with happiness. Do not answer yet, Señorita," said he, noticing the frightened look in Loma's face in consequence of his fiery wooing. "I have alarmed you and I beg you to forgive

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me," his ardent manner changing to one of soft pleading as he sank at her feet. "Only give me time to win you, Señorita," he begged.

Penitently his lustrous eyes sought hers, compelling her to see the love in their depths to which her own heart responded with its first throb of affection for the handsome Señor.

It was a relief to Loma when she saw the padre approaching, but when Don Carlos turned to the priest and begged that he would plead for him and said that he loved this sweet-faced girl of the mission ruins and would make her his wife, the old padre, seeing the dawning love light in Loma's eyes, joined their hands and blessed them, well pleased, he said, that the dear child had found a worthy lover. With a prayer on his lips for her future, he passed on his daily round of mission work, leaving the newly betrothed pair to their happiness.

Loma's love for Padre Soto and her faith in him was so great that she never questioned aught he might bid her do; and when he placed her hand in that of Don Carlos and gave them his blessing, there was nothing strange to her in the thought that she had that morning, for the first time, met the Señor. With the unquestioned faith of a child obeying its parents, she gave her heart to him without reserve. When, a moment later, Loma lifted her eyes to her lover's, after the betrothal kiss, she started in affright, for there, a few feet

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from them, she saw the scowling face of Pedro Mendoza, who, having returned, had again followed her to the ruins. He passed them by without a word, but with such a fiendish smile that Loma made the sign of the cross and breathed a prayer to the Virgin Mother to protect her new found happiness from the dread of his presence.

When, later in the day, she heard Pedro had gone to San Diego again, her heart was glad within her. One blissful week, such as she had never known was possible, had come to her, and with the sanction and good wishes of Padre Soto, the lovers passed their time in riding and walking about the country and enjoying every precious moment that was left to them. Only one week of such happiness was theirs before Don Carlos must continue his journey up the coast to Monterey, in obedience to his father's wishes.

When the time came for his departure, Don Carlos took with him the padre's promise that, on his return, he and Loma should wed and then together search for Loma's parents. With this hope in his heart he left San Juan Capistrano, counting the days till his return. He wished much to see Loma once more as he saw her at first, amid broken walls and fallen brick, kneeling before her shrine and rivalling the birds with her song of praise, but many changes were to come to her, of both sorrow and joy, ere they would meet again,

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for it was decreed that there was to be no repetition of the scene for Don Carlos Serrano.

Not many days after the departure of Don Carlos for Monterey, there came to the mission one morning a rough and wicked-looking sailor who sought the padre and informed him that he had been one of the pirate band, but had reformed and was now living an honest life. He had come, he said, to make inquiries about his child, who had been left at the mission sixteen years before. He described the child and said her name was Loma. His wife had been accidentally killed while preparing the child for bed by two of the pirates who were fighting. He confessed that he was a very wicked man then, and had no love for the child, but when the vessel came ashore they brought the babe with them and gave her away. He spoke of the chain about the infant's neck and said it was one he had stolen from the neck of a rich Don's child in Mexico and gave it to his wife, who placed it about her own baby's neck and also gave it the name engraved on the clasp. He further said he had a good home to give his daughter now and he could find for her a good husband.

Padre Soto, shocked and almost speechless with grief, listened to the sailor's confession with a breaking heart. Could it be, he questioned, that the dear child had such an evil father as this sailor of the pirates' crew had been? Could it be, he again

repeated, that the pure beautiful-faced girl belonged to such a hard, villainous-looking man?

Padre Soto could not doubt the man's seemingly truthful story and evident desire to undo the wrongs of the past as far as he was able. When, soon after the interview, Loma saw the padre walking with bent head among the cloister ruins, she knew some great grief had come to her dear old friend.

Alas! Such grief had not come to Padre Soto in all his mission life and when he told Loma of the sailor's words and saw the light fade from her eyes and the color leave her bright young face, and her lifeless form fall in a swoon on the tiled floor, he knew the child had got her death blow.

With water from the fountain he revived the broken-hearted girl, but no words passed her lips as the padre repeated the man's story, till it dawned on her mind that this sailor who called himself her father wished to take her away. Then with white lips she said she would not go with him and that she had more right to her life than this pirate of the seas could ever have. She vowed she would enter a convent and urged the padre to send her at once to Los Angeles, where, behind those walls, among the sisters, she would be welcome.

Promising it should be as she wished, Padre Soto placed his hand on her head with the parting words, "Be brave, my daughter," then left her kneeling at her shrine and entered the humble dwelling which served as the mission chapel, to add his

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prayers to hers, that the saints would help her to bear the trial and disappointment that had come to her young life

"Oh, why did I not die with my mother," she moaned, as for hours she knelt at the shrine before which so many prayers had been said and so many hopes had been whispered that some day she would find her own people.

The desire and hope and belief that the saints would aid her in her search had grown to be her daily thought and constant prayer, and now it was hard to tear the hope from her heart that there were no parents to find, nothing but an ugly reality. How unlike anything she had pictured in her pure life, for she had seen this vicious-looking man coming from the chapel and shrank away as he cast his wicked eyes upon her.

"Surely this man cannot be my father," she said and over and over in her mind was repeated this thought, till gradually it grew to be a comfort and gave her strength to endure this great affliction. As she moved dizzily away from the place, she came face to face with Pedro Mendoza, who, with sympathy thinly expressed in his looks, stood waiting for her at the entrance to the ruins.

When he saw her he hastened to express his pity for her in her trouble, and to beg that she would not go away with her father but stay and become his wife. He said he had just returned and only a few moments before heard the sad news, but while

he entreated her for one encouraging word, there suddenly came to Loma, born of Divine help, the thought, "This is the work of Pedro; it is a plot between Pedro Mendoza and the sailor; this bad man is not my father and Pedro is wickedly acting a part."

Swiftly the ideas were formed in her mind and loosened her tongue as she said, with withering scorn, "Pedro Mendoza, I would rather go with that wretch than marry you, but praise be to all the saints, he has no claim on me and if he had, nothing would force me to go with him. It has been revealed to me that this man's presence in San Juan Capistrano is your work. You have plotted with him thinking to get me into your power, but the saints will protect me and God will punish you for your wicked deeds."

With muttered curses and a baffled look on his dark face, Pedro Mendoza stood and watched Loma, as, without another word, she followed Padre Soto into the holy sanctuary where she found the dear old priest praying for her.

When he saw her coming towards him resolute and strong, upheld as she was by the belief that the sailor was not her father, he could hardly believe that it was the same crushed and hopeless girl whom he had left a short time before.

"The saints have heard our prayers," murmured Padre Soto, with tears of joy streaming down his kind old face. When Loma told the padre about

her meeting with Pedro and of what she had accused him, Padre Soto looked grave and troubled as he said, "You must go from San Juan to-morrow, dear child, for there is no limit to what bad men will do to attain their evil ends. I am convinced you are right, my daughter, and that Pedro has made us this trouble, but the saints be praised, dear child, that it is not true what they would have us believe. To-morrow I will put you in Sister Ursula's care, and may the saints protect you till then." With the padre's blessing, Loma left the chapel, feeling comforted and hopeful once more.

One last visit to the shrine, Loma said she would make before leaving the spot where she had spent so many happy hours. The shrine which she had so jealously guarded must not be left for alien hands to throw down and desecrate. To these bits of stone and broken images she had told over and over again her thoughts and desires, her longing for a home and friends of her own kind, some one to take the place of the dear old padre who alone understood her, when he had passed away. She wept as she recalled the days of the past and realized now that the parting hour was near, how closely her life was woven with every detail of her simple shrine, with her home life at Mother Marda's and with her loving companion Padre Soto. Doubly dear to Loma became the associations of her life at Capistrano when she found that, for her own safety, she must go from there months before the return of

Don Carlos. Sadly she lingered about the place, hallowed with such pleasant memories. For the last time she knelt before the altar and at her devotions she prayed for many peaceful years of life for Padre Soto. She asked for the continued watchfulness of her patron saint over her future, which would be so different from her past.

Arising from her knees, strengthened and refreshed in spirit, Loma proceeded with the hardest of all tasks, that of throwing down her shrine. Tearfully she took the pieces of the beloved relics which the padre had sacredly blessed, and widely scattered them among the ruins. First carefully selecting a memento of the shrine for a keepsake, Loma went on with the work of moving the heavy stones, of which the foundation was composed, not wishing, as she said, to leave a trace for those who could not understand her reverence for the holy place.

In her efforts to move some of the larger tiles, she slipped and fell heavily against a broken arch, dislodging and bringing down a mass of crushed adobe brick. As she arose and shook off the dust which enveloped her, she saw disclosed a niche in the wall, which had been loosely filled with small pieces of tile and bits of mortar, a strange discovery, Loma thought, to be found in that part of the ruins and so near her shrine.

Curious as to what might be hidden so far above her head, Loma piled the stones again, one on

another, until she could reach the place by standing on them. With haste she pulled the pieces of brick and mortar away, till her fingers, groping about, could find no more, then, looking in, she saw the nook was deeper than she could reach.

Procuring a strong stick, Loma again mounted the pile of stones and, reaching quite to the end of the dark space, touched something soft which she gradually worked towards the opening. On its gaining the light, she saw she had found a large bundle, such as she had often seen sailors carry, tied about with an old red scarf.

"For how many years had it lain there," she wondered, "and for what object had it been so carefully hidden?"

While Loma turned the package over wonderingly, she saw the padre approaching. When he drew near she showed him the parcel and made known to him her strange discovery of it. Padre Soto, in much astonishment, bade her open the package at once. Then it was, to their joyful surprise, that Loma found the clothing, which had been removed from her, when a child, and securely placed in the ruined wall of the mission. On each little garment was embroidered the name, "Loma Montero." Clumsily written on a piece of soiled paper were these words:

"This clothing belongs to the daughter of Don Louis Montero, of Acapulco, Mexico, who, with his wife, was lost in a storm at sea. Their little

daughter, the only survivor of the wreck of the ship, was left with an old Mexican woman at San Juan Capistrano."

There was no name signed to the paper, but it was believed to have been written by the man who left the child with Mother Marda.

To Loma's great joy, Padre Soto could assure her that her parents were alive and well when his nephew left Mexico. He said her people were old friends of his and friends of the Serrano family. The padre said he had heard several years before of Loma's parents losing their only child, a little girl, but he supposed the child had died in her home, and not having heard her name, had no reason to connect their loss with the little waif left at Capistrano.

Accompanied by Padre Soto and Sister Ursula, Loma sailed for Mexico a few days after making the discovery of her birth. The voyage was pleasant, and the meeting with her parents on her arrival was all that Loma had pictured it would be.

There they learned that the vessel in which the Montero family embarked had been robbed, and the child and her nurse secretly taken aboard the pirate's ship. A sudden and fearful storm arose as the boats parted, and the ship in which the Montero family had taken passage was wrecked. But few of the passengers were saved. Don Louis Montero and his wife were among the fortunate ones. Their child and its nurse (as they believed for

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years) went down with the ship. When the pirates learned of the loss of the vessel and heard that all the passengers and crew had perished, they had no further use for the child, so left it at Capistrano. Of the nurse nothing was known for several years. She had been put ashore in a strange country, but eventually found her way back to her home in Mexico, and was there informed that her old master and mistress were living. To them she told of the pirate's cruelty and how their child was stolen for a ransom, but when they heard that the passengers went down with the ship and all hope of a reward for the child was gone, they took the infant away from her at night, and afterwards said they had thrown it into the sea.

Don Louis Montero and his wife mourned many years for the loss of their child—years in which their little girl was being so kindly cared for by Mother Marda and Padre Soto.

When Don Carlos Serrano returned from Monterey and learned that Loma had discovered in San Juan Capistrano ruins the proofs of her parentage and the place where her people lived, he was overjoyed with happiness at the speedy answer to their prayers. With joyful eagerness he hastened his departure, longing to meet his beloved Loma in the home of her parents, where he heard she had been for some time. Many months had elapsed since he left her gazing with tearful eyes at the vessel which carried him away, months that had

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seemed ages while they kept them apart. Now, instead of watching the ship that took her betrothed farther away from her, Loma eagerly watched the incoming vessels, hoping and praying for his safe return to share in her great happiness.

When the white sails of the ship that bore Don Carlos back to his native land were sighted, there was much joy in Loma's heart as she watched with Padre Soto their near approach. Happy, also, were Loma's parents at the return of Don Carlos, whom they knew and loved, and who had been indirectly the cause of restoring to them so precious a child.

But when Don Carlos pleaded with them for an early marriage, they begged that they might keep their daughter a few months longer, then they would give her to him.

A year later the wedding bells joyfully rang for Don Carlos Serrano and Loma Montero. Padre Soto once more joined the hands of the happy pair, but this time he spoke the words that made them one. Loma never returned to the Capistrano mission, but a princely gift for Mother Marda found its way to San Juan. Also, a wedding gift to Rosa, whom she heard was to marry Pedro Mendoza. Pedro had repented of his sins and confessed to Padre Soto's successor that he and the sailor had lied to the padre to get Loma's consent to marry him. The sailor, he said, was to be paid a sum of money if he succeeded in making

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Padre Soto believe his story. But the Heavenly Father brought their evil work to naught, and the padre punished them both by a long penance for their wickedness.

It was a fortunate circumstance that led Loma to choose that spot in the great ruins for her shrine in preference to many others. So well concealed in the broken mission wall they lay for many years, these proofs of her parentage, ever within reach of her hands and protected by her shrine. Cleverly hidden and closely guarded till Fate, through her various mediums, chose to unlock for her the secret of her life. Without these proofs it might have been for Loma a long and possibly hopeless search.

Often she was heard to say that she had gained all she wished for in this life, through the kindness of the saints and had lost nothing in leaving her old home, for her good Padre Soto would for the remainder of his life live with his brother monks in Mexico. His superior said he had earned his rest and to a younger padre was left the mission work of San Juan Capistrano.

Among the Señora Serrano's valued treasures was preserved a piece of the broken image of a saint, a relic of the earthquake of 1812, and a souvenir of the shrine she built when a child. This bit of broken stone held many pleasant recollections of happy days. It recalled her hopes and desires, in the fulfilment of which she had been richly

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blessed. It recalled the morning Don Carlos appeared and frightened her into silence with his fierce love making. It recalled the happy days which followed the padre's blessing on their betrothal. It recalled the pictures of the mission ruins as she had seen them in summer, in winter, in storms and in sunshine, the dearest place in all the world to her. The remembrance also of which through a long life of happiness never became dim, for many were the visits made in the spirit, to this sacred spot, refreshing anew the memories of her early home at the Franciscan Mission of San Juan Capistrano.

BARTOLO'S RETURN

AN ABALONE SHELL

*Last night I found upon the sandy beach
An abalone shell, the sea had thrown
From off the rocks, the place where it had grown.
That lustrous nacre as it lay to bleach,
Gave me a theme that I to all could preach ;
It was, " How little are God's wonders known,"
On every side so lavish has He sown,
Yet on we pass quite heedless what's in reach.
Then sad became my thoughts there on the sand,
While restless waves their nocturnes moaned to me ;
For that bright pearl made by our Father's hand,
Disclosed that I, of intellect so free,
Could at my death leave not one work so grand,
As was that shell left stranded by the sea.*

— " Father Junipero Serra," Act III.

BARTOLO'S RETURN

SINCE early morning Manuela and her three little girls had been busily working in and about their humble adobe home at Mission San Gabriel. The cleaning, cooking and decorating had kept them all happily employed throughout the long, long day. The children had gathered wild flowers and placed them in every part of the large room; brilliant wreaths were festooned on the time-stained walls as high as their little hands could reach. Huge boughs from the pepper tree loaded with scarlet berries, filled and brightened all the dark corners, and the deeply recessed window seats. These were banked high with many lovely varieties of vines and gorgeous wild blossoms, which concealed the broken adobe plaster, as well as the rough and ancient wood-work, turning those spacious alcoves into perfect fairy bowers of loveliness. Though many of the flowers were beginning to droop their heads from having been gathered so long, still they would look beautiful when the room was lighted at night by the open fire that cast its ruddy glow like great shafts of light to the far corners of the room. The firelight softened and brought out beautiful pictures from the discolored ceiling, as it danced and waved and flickered about the place.

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

Ah, yes! Manuela well knew what phantoms of pleasure and pain the weird and ghostly shadows could nightly contrive for her, as she worked while her little ones slept. For the last year the wavering shadows had outlined only gruesome shapes that flitted about overhead and down the cracked and broken wall. Ofttimes it was a fierce battle in which she saw Bartolo slain. Then again she fancied the flames leaped red and angry and reminded her of blood. At such times she prayed for the protection of her loved ones. Fanciful pictures, teeming with happy scenes she had not found after Bartolo left to serve his country. Since that day her vivid imagination had conjured up visions of battlefields and dead and dying men. Such a season of joyousness as this day had been to her she had not known for many months.

Dancing, singing, happy as birds, her children flitted in and out of the flower-decked room. The well-swept floor and hearth, and the festive appearance of the house, created little bursts of excitement in the children and a happiness too deep for words in the mother. Their childish delight was especially manifest when their mother held up to view some dainty bit of pastry, in which they were to share. The savory smell of food pervading the house was, to the little ones, an odor far more agreeable than the sweet perfume exhaled from the banks of flowers. For whom was all this great preparation made? Why the happy smile on Man-

BARTOLO'S RETURN

uela's face and the glad light in her eyes? Why was her step more light than usual? She was too poor to have friends on whom she could spend so much time and money, for she had to work hard each day to support herself and little ones. Sometimes she would work for the sisters, washing and ironing their beautiful white bonnets, and often she had work in some American family where, besides her wages, they would give her food and clothing for her children. Yes, the *Americanos* were very kind to her, and why should they not be kind? Did they not precipitate this cruel war, that took from her people their homes and their protectors? Still they were very kind; had they not given her the most beautiful flowers at the time of year when flowers were scarce, that she might decorate the picture of the infant Jesus? Before the painting of the Christ-child now were strewn bunches of pure white, fragrant lilies which had been sent to her only that morning. Surely they were kind to remember her this day, the day of all days to her.

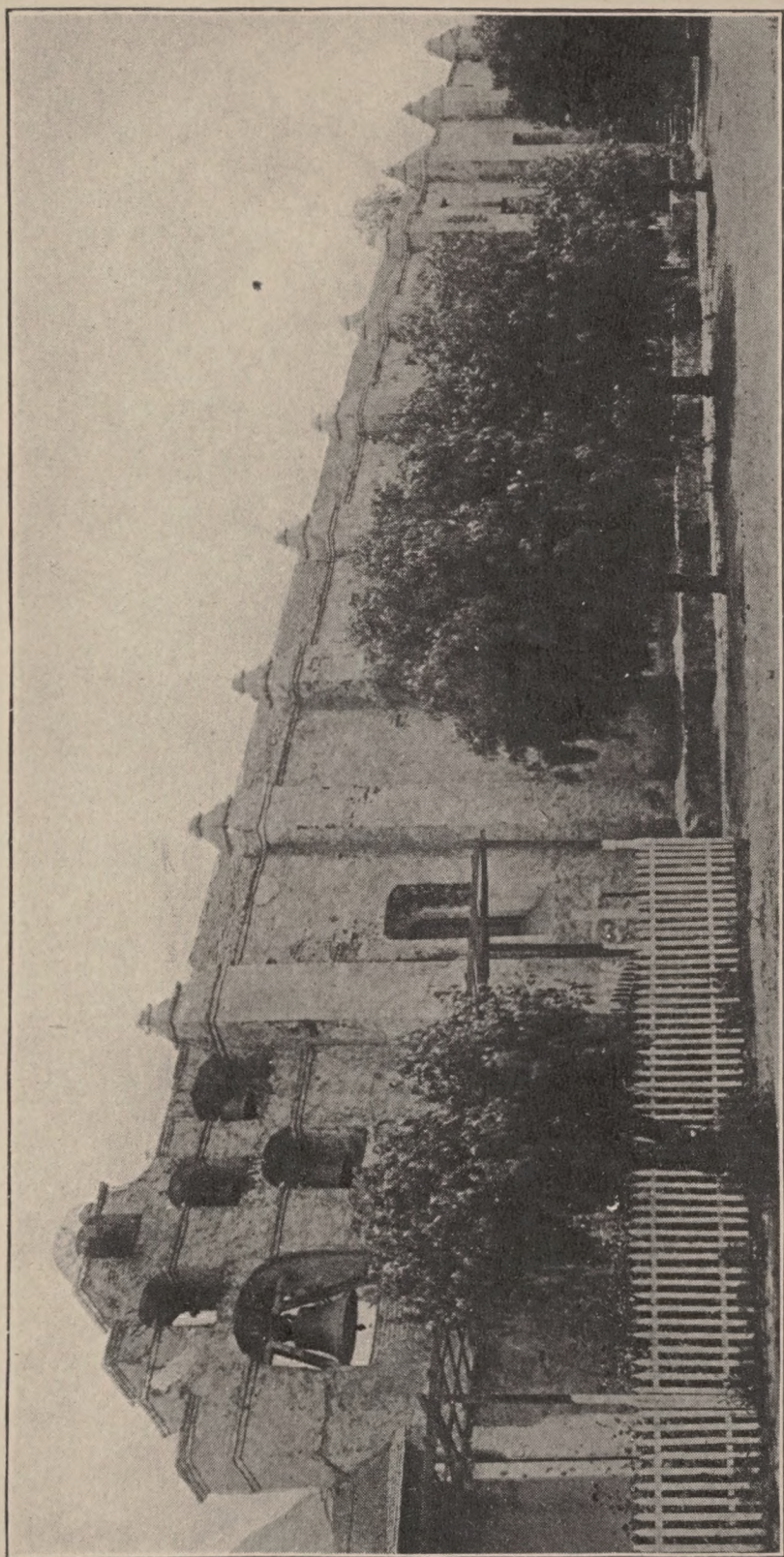
As the time drew near for the expected one to arrive, the excitement of the children grew intense. In their eagerness to see down the road they pressed their little brown faces close to the moss-grown picket fence, and, with eyes shining like stars, eagerly gazed through the open spaces, waiting for the first glimpse of the rise of dust that would herald the approach of horses. Manuela had answered their impatient question, "Is it not

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

almost time for *mia Padre* to come?" many times in the last hour. Even Manuela, now that she might expect her husband at any moment, found herself becoming as impatient as they.

For almost two years Bartolo had served his country, and now he was coming home to rest and gain strength from a wound he had received. "He was very weak," he wrote, but thought he would be able to travel soon and hoped to be with them in a few days. Manuela wondered if he would know the children, they had grown so tall, and the baby, who could not walk when he left, was now running about, so bright and happy. And such pretty children as they all were, where could you find their equal? Not among the pale faced *Americanos*, she was sure. Oh, no! their children were not so pretty as hers. How proud Bartolo would be of them, she thought, and now her impatience exceeded that of the children, and she divided her time by running to the door and looking in the direction from which Bartolo was to come, and by watching the appetizing stew that was steaming over the fire.

Suddenly came a cry of joy from the children, "*Mia padre! Mia padre!*" Yes, there was the cloud of dust at last, and through it could be seen a wagon coming slowly up the road. But why creeping along? Was Bartolo not as impatient as they? But then, how thoughtless of her, Manuela said, of course he was tired with his long journey,



MISSION SAN GABRIEL ARCANGEL

Founded September 8, 1771

BARTOLO'S RETURN

he had been so ill, and the roads were rough. Slowly the cart came nearer in the gathering gloom, mistily wreathed about with its gray curtain of dust, and hiding her loved one from view. Nearer and nearer it crawled towards the impatient watchers, and now each turn of the wheels seemed slower than the last to Manuela's anxious eyes. At last her keen sight penetrated the gray cloud, and she saw old Mateo, who had left that morning to meet her husband. But why, she asked herself, was he alone and looking so sad? Did Bartolo not come, after all? Ah, yes, she could see now that the wagon was not empty, he was lying down, he must be very tired; or perhaps ill. She hastened to the road as the wagon, with its burden, drew up, but the sad face of Mateo told the story before he could speak: Bartolo was dead. He had died on the way to his loved ones.

With a heart-breaking cry of despair Manuela sank down by the lifeless body of her husband, whom kind friends had removed from the wagon. They carried Bartolo into the flower-decked room and placed him on a cot, which little hands had strewn with bright blossoms for his resting place. Then the three little children, with sorrowfully frightened faces, silently followed their mother as she was borne, almost lifeless, into the house. With a strange mixture of fear and awe they timidly passed through the door from which they had bounded so joyously a few moments before. Then

ROMANCES OF THE MISSION DAYS

the gloom of night spread over the land, shutting them in as with the darkness of death. Turning the happy day into a night of despair, their festival, into mourning. Surely, none but the Holy Mother could give them comfort now.

THE DREAM CHILD'S PROPHECY

THE PROPHECY OF FATHER JUNIPERO SERRA

*Before me now a golden era looms ;
Progressive spirits will invade these wilds,
And coming, stay ; there are attractions here :
Within these mountain borders are contained
All things that needy man can ever want,
For Nature reveled in her lavishment
And left a masterpiece terrestrial :
If ever distant shores were to be known,
And in the knowing, recognized as great ;
Then o'er the name of California,
Entwine the seal and symbols of success !*

— Father Junipero Serra, Act IV, Scene II.

THE DREAM CHILD'S PROPHECY

BENEATH the oaks and among the tombs of the mission cemetery of San Fernando Rey I often lingered long after the sun went down. And on this particular evening of which I write the air was sweet with the perfume of flowers, the birds sent out sleepy little notes of good-night to each other, and mingled with the soft swaying of branches and rustle of leaves was the drowsy hum of insects waking to life as evening came on.

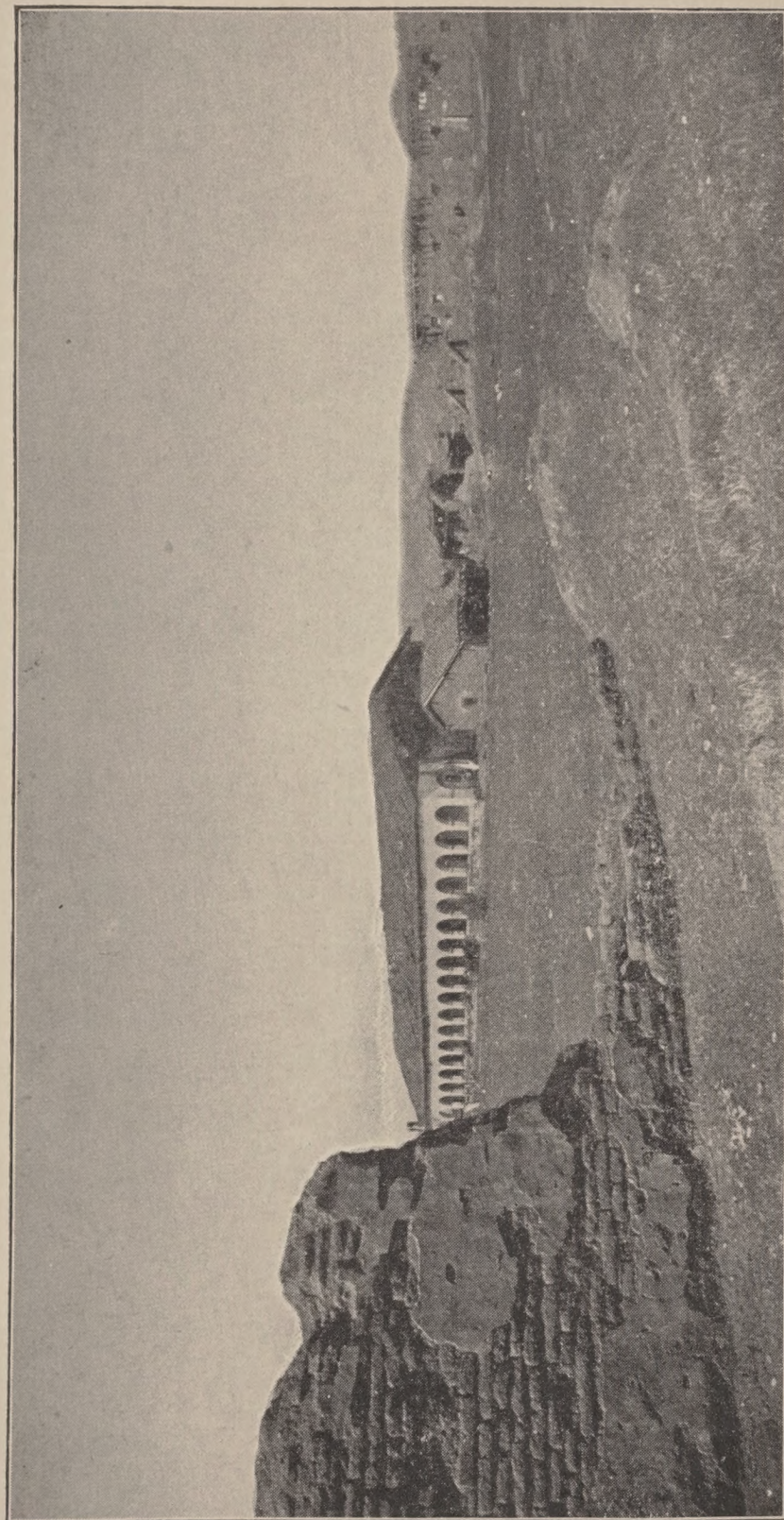
One grave among the many attracted me more than the others, and I doubted not its history would be worth learning. I had noticed fresh flowers were each day twined about the sunken cross and broken, moss-covered fencing that surrounded it. I twice caught sight of an old Mexican woman, feeble with age, leaving the place. Thinking she could weave a pretty romance for me if I could get her to talk, I watched for her the next day quite near the sunken grave. In answer to my question, what the inscription meant, she translated for me the words: "Nita, the Dream Child," which was engraved in Spanish on the stone cross.

By adroitly questioning the old woman I gleaned from her what she knew and what she had heard

when a child, which I will relate in her own words :

“When Nita’s mother died she left her little girl in charge of the good sisters, bequeathing her to their kind care ; and with them she grew up to be a lovely girl, the pride of her father and the beloved of all the parish. Always a thoughtful child, she seemed in the last year of her life to be given over to dreaming and seeing visions to such a degree that her friends, while they loved her, also held aloof from her, as with a holy awe. Her large, mournful eyes were growing larger and more far-seeing each day. In vain the sisters talked with her and consulted with each other ; nothing would arouse her from the gloom of her thoughts. Her father would say, ‘Why do you worry your little head with such foolishness, Nita, dreaming dreams and seeing visions that will come to naught ? You best be learning your catechism and asking the Holy Mother to drive away the evil spirits. I heard the kind sisters speaking of you last night, and they say you are not as other children.’

“‘I know I am not, *mia padre*, but I can’t help my visions, as you call them. I tell you before many years the change will come, and our old life will be of the past. Strange people will invade this country, and unchristian doings will remove all that the padres have worked so hard to establish. Our beautiful mission will be left to crumble to decay, and this happy life will be spoken of as an



MISSION SAN FERNANDO REY DE ESPAÑA

Founded September 8, 1797

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epoch of the early days of California, without a regret for the loss of all that made our life so beautiful. This new condition will not benefit our people, their lands will be taken from them, their rights will not be respected. Already I see the dawn of a new era in these visions, and the almost extinction of our race is sure to follow. I will not live to see that time, but others of my companions will.'

"Nita's father silently turned away and sought the good priest, to whom he told his troubles, and asked advice how best to deal with his unfortunate child, whom he was sure was possessed by the evil one. Yes, the beautiful Dream Child, as she was called, faded away day by day, and as she grew weaker her powers of seeing the future grew stronger till almost her last words were, 'Look for the new era! It will come in your time, and it means decay to our missions and death to our people.'

"And so she died, and San Fernando knew her no more. Scarce sixteen years had she lived, years so little in keeping with childhood; surely the name Dream Child was not amiss. Yes, she is buried here, and some one of her old companions place flowers on the cross above her grave each day.

"A few are all that are left now who knew her in life and saw her buried in this grave over a half century ago.

"I well remember the day, though I was but a child; the sad drip, drip of the rain mingled with our tears, and impressed us still more with the gloom and truth of her prophecy. Yes, I live in the past, and it comforts me to sit here for hours each day thinking of the child who dreamed away her life," said the Mexican woman, as she drew her shawl about her and arose.

"What was the great change? Need you ask, Señor?" replied the old woman, as she disappeared in the dusk of a perfect California evening. And need it be doubted what the panorama was the gifted child saw as she looked through the years to come. The strangers did indeed invade these shores, and with them came modern improvements, and keeping pace with science and progress came the decay of the missions and the gradual extinction of the native Californians.

Could the Dream Child, spoken of so lovingly by the old woman, have foreseen in her wildest imagining Southern California as it is to-day, with its wealth of lovely homes, taking the place of the historic adobes; its electric cars climbing up the mountains to palaces perched on the top of its high ridges, its steam cars threading their way over the valleys and through the mountains; what could not a dream child of to-day see in the next fifty years? Verily, all things are possible in California. Nature, with her marvelous power, has taken ages to perfect the wonders of this western

THE DREAM CHILD'S PROPHECY

world, in mountains, valleys and climate; and man, with his boundless opportunities, is ever striving to imitate the skill by which Nature works her charms.

No marvel that the Dream Child saw the country slipping from the grasp of her people. So perfect a climate could not belong to a few, and even coming changes may more than equal the growth of the past and present age. Then we will find ourselves growing old and lost in the progress of things, as was the old Mexican woman, with her sad, "Need you ask, Señor?"

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